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Linking theory and practice in popular education : conceptual issues and a case of training popular educators in Colombia.

Mario A. Acevedo
University of Massachusetts Amherst

LINKING THEORY AND PRACTICE IN POPULAR EDUCATION: CONCEPTUAL ISSUES AND A CASE OF TRAINING POPULAR EDUCATORS IN COLOMBIA

A Dissertation Presented

by

MARIO A. ACEVEDO

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Approved as to style and content by:

David Kinsey, Chair

Robert Miltz, Member

Peter Park, Member

Bailey Jackson, Dean
School of Education

Dedico este trabajo a los educadores populares que con su labor contribuyen a la construcción de una sociedad más libre, justa y amable.

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ABSTRACT

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FEBRUARY, 1992

MARIO A. ACEVEDO, B.A. UNIVERSIDAD DEL VALLE - COLOMBIA.

M.Ed., UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS

Ed.D., UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS

Directed by: Professor David C. Kinsey

This study examines the gap between theory and practice in Popular Education, discusses the implications, and explores ways in which training can promote better linkages between the two domains. Its central concern is that this discrepancy hinders conceptual development and theoretically informed practice in the field. The specific vehicles for inquiry are 1) a critical assessment of the relation between theory and practice as seen in the literature and in Latin American programs, and 2) an analysis of a training program for popular educators to illustrate options for linkage.

Initially the author presents the characteristics of Popular Education as seen from the perspective of practitioners in the reports of their regional meetings, from a comparative study of 17 Popular Education Programs, and from the literature on Popular Education. He also critically reviews the literature and perspective of

researchers to identify divergences between theory and practice, to assess problems that result, and to find alternative strategies for linkage.

The study next focuses on training in order to analyze how the gap between theory and practice can be either widened through an "instrumental" approach to training, or narrowed through a "holistic" training strategy.

Then the Training Program for Popular Educators at the University del Valle of Colombia is introduced as a program that attempts to implement a holistic training strategy. This case study is based on documents produced during its design and implementation, interviews, and participant observation of the author. It is used to understand how such a program can mediate between the theory of Popular Education and the practice of its participants as popular educators on the community level.

The attributes of Popular Education are used as criteria for analyzing this strategy and examining how it put principles into practice. Problems encountered were obstacles in assessing the pertinence of these principles within the context of the program, constraints presented by the University, and habits or attitudes of teachers and participants affecting the adoption of important principles.

Finally, there are concluding observations on Popular Education theory and suggestions for how training programs and further research can contribute to the need for linking theory and practice.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Problem and purpose of the study

The central concern of this study is the discrepancy observed between discourse and action in the field of Popular Education and its resulting problem of lack of theoretical development. Specifically, the study attempts to identify areas of need and approaches for linking theory and practice, through two complementary and reinforcing research procedures: a) the critical assessment of the relationship between theory and practice and b) the analysis of a Training Program for Popular Educators which could represent an opportunity to strengthen Popular Education Theory and to disclose paths to adjust existing gaps between theory and practice within the field.

Many popular educators, like Parajuli [1986], recognize that although the practice of Popular Education has advanced, its theoretical formulation has lagged behind. The lack of theoretical rigor is - according to those scholars - one of the main problems in this field and creates the risks of Popular Education being coopted by interests contrary to those of the popular sectors.

The description and analysis of common general characteristics, as extrapolated from practical experiences, has constituted, to a large extent, the basis for deriving a theory. However, at this point some important questions arise:

* Is actual description of some characteristics of Popular Education programs an appropriate way to construct a theory?

* What are the implications of this approach to theory building for the rationalization and improvement of the practice of popular educators?

* What are the reasons for the difficulty in defining Popular Education from a theoretical perspective?

I think that the mere description of various programs' common characteristics is not enough to construct a strong educational alternative palpably different from the programs implemented by the dominant or hegemonic classes. Concepts like participation, organization, power, dialogue, culture, knowledge, practice, social change, etc., must be properly defined, inter-connected, and placed in an internally consistent theoretical context that will allow educators not only to describe what they are doing, but also to anticipate what kind of society they want to promote through education. In fact, these issues of definition, interconnection, and contextualization are the part of the critique of Popular Education theory that I would like to address through this dissertation.

However, when I reviewed the literature with these questions in mind I found that there is not a consensus on this point. Some authors explicitly declare that the lack of a finished definition of Popular Education, far from being an indication of a theoretical deficiency, in fact stems directly from one of its basic principles which states that it cannot be defined in and of itself but only in relation to the strategic purposes of the popular organizations and movements of which it is a part or to which it gives support. For example, Barreiro states:

> In reality, a "finished definition" could finish with Popular Education itself, since one of its central principles is that it is not defined *per se*, but according to the strategy proposed in each stage of the people's struggle for liberation [1982, p.26].

From this point of view, the difficulty in defining Popular Education could be considered an indicator of its subsidiary nature in relation to the formulation and development of an alternative political effort of the popular classes to achieve economic, social, and cultural changes in Latin America.[1]

Following a similar line of thought, but emphasizing another feature, other authors maintain that the difficulty in conceiving of Popular Education as a complete theory is a "positive" result of its "unfinished process" attribute.

Vio-Grossi, for example, affirms that, rather than being a limitation, this lack of definition "may be one of its most remarkable strengths, since this kind of education emphasizes the value of processes rather than results" [1981, p.73].

Others, on the contrary, consider it a fundamental task to look for - or to construct from practice - theoretical explanations that give sense to the varied and abundant educational practices developed within the popular classes by individuals, groups, organizations, and institutions that often have diverse origins and dissimilar goals. Although these authors also recognize that Popular Education is more a social and political fact still in process of definition than it is a complete methodology or a coherent theory, they argue that the lack of theoretical rigor is one of the main problems in this field and contributes to the risks of Popular Education being co-opted by interests contrary to those of the popular classes.

This concern coincides with the aspiration for a clear theoretical orientation expressed by practitioners on various occasions. The need for a theory that allows them to establish appropriate links between the liberating discourse of Popular Education and their daily educational practice, which would help them avoid the pitfall of

recreating practices of domination and indoctrination through the merely mechanical use of participatory techniques.

This search for links between theory and practice also responds to the need for articulating the relationship between defining the specific pedagogical dimension of Popular Education and other related social practices [Brandao, 1984], and the need for relating its specific political orientation to other educational projects [Peresson, 1983; Jara, 1984].

Despite such differing emphases, the overall search is to find ways to link the practice of popular educators to a theory which makes possible not only a critical understanding of what has been called Popular Education, but also the formulation and implementation of strategies for transforming their practice in political and pedagogical terms. Underlying most of these concerns is the conviction that the mere description and interchange of experiences is not enough for developing a critical and transforming theory of Popular Education.[2]

Sharing this conviction, I would like to explore possibilities and conditions for developing the theory of Popular Education and linking it to popular educators'

practice. In doing this I want to base this inquiry on the literature and a case study, and also utilize the perspective of my own experience as a trainer of popular educators. For the case study, I will analyze the Training Program for Popular Educators conducted by the University del Valle in Cali, Colombia, and examine how the approache used in this program may make some significant contributions both to strengthening Popular Education theory and to linking theory and practice.

In other words, the study aspires to answer the following **Primary Question:**

> What are the needs for, and approaches to, making appropriate links between theory and practice in Popular Education, and under what conditions can a training program of popular educators contribute to theory development by making those links?

For methodological purposes, the above question can be separated into the following **Implementing Questions:**

1. What are basic characteristics of Popular Education programs, according to its practitioners?

2. What appear to be the major weaknesses in the theory of Popular Education and what could be some strategies for strengthening links between theory and practice within the field?

3. What implications can the training of popular educators have for narrowing or widening the gap between theory and practice in Popular Education?

4. What is the context and training strategy of the Training Program for Popular Educators and why is it a useful case for examining the role of training in theory development?

5. How does the Training Program understand and handle the Popular Education Theory and how does its pedagogical model appear to contribute to an appropriate articulation between theory and practice?

6. What are the conditions the program must fulfill in order to effectively contribute to the advancement of the theory in Popular Education?

7. What are the major needs for future research on theory development for Popular Education?

Preliminary conceptual framework

I chose to talk here about a **preliminary** conceptual framework because the main concepts of what could constitute a theoretical framework of Popular Education are, precisely, the object of discussion in this study. However, I have to establish some premises, assumptions, and perspectives in order to clarify the questions to be asked while reviewing both the Popular Education experiences (and related literature), and the Training Program for Popular Educators at the University del Valle. These must function as principles that will guide my analysis and inform my conclusions. So in this section I will present some of my postulates - about 1) the concept of popular that qualifies this kind of education, 2) the role of education in the struggle for hegemony, and 3) the roots of Popular Education - that will inform the approach used to examine the main characteristics of this educational paradigm as perceived today[3].

The "popular" attribute of Popular Education. The commonly accepted statement that Popular Education is, in the most general sense, an education that is both directed to the popular sectors of the society and is in agreement with their interests, conveys an ambiguity in relation to the concept the "popular sectors". This may include not

only the working class but all disadvantaged groups of the society. The ambiguity is, according to Oxhorn [1991], related to the lack of a precisely defined sociological category which is capable of encompassing this diverse category of social actors.

However, within the diversity of the popular sectors, there is a common characteristic that permits us to consider them as a single social actor: they have been excluded from deciding and defining the policies which orient the social, political, cultural, and economic development of the society as whole; and marginalized through limited access to the basic necessities of life, such as adequate housing, health care, education, etc. Such an exclusion has been able to repress, but not destroy, their potential for improving their living conditions and for generating a fundamental change in their situation. In this sense, "the notion of **popular** becomes associated with **democracy** because popular interests represent the interests of the vast majority in developing societies" [p.68]. That is, the adjective "popular" expresses the collective aspirations and desires of grass-root social groups.

Education is a tool in the struggle for hegemony[4]. Education can only be understood and defined within the socio-political context in which it is immersed. In Latin

America this socio-political context is characterized by innumerable conflicts generated by the imposition of the capitalist mode of production and its social relationships, the subsequent resistance of other rural and communal types of economies and social organizations, and the attempt to establish a socialist economic and political alternative. This confrontation has generated a complex history of economic exploitation, cultural control, and political oppression, on one hand, and economic, cultural and political resistance, on the other.

Against this background of conflicts and divergences, the emergence and development of different educational models should be conceptually situated within a context of struggle for hegemony between dominant and subordinated classes. But the fact that these conflicts and contradictions manifest themselves at the level of the superstructure of society (the ideological and political instances in which education is situated), which has a certain autonomy in relation to the economic infrastructure in a given social formation, compel every new educational model to confront the contradiction of being at the same time both a process of cultural and ideological reproduction, and a force which contributes to social change.

In most of the Latin American countries, however, the reproductive role of official education has transcended its transformative role, contributing to the imposition and reproduction of capitalist social relations. In these countries formal education has contributed to the destruction of a cultural diversity that would inhibit the consolidation of capitalist ideology and elitist political control. Non-formal Education, as promoted by the state and development agencies, has contributed to the integration of "traditional peasants" and other "non-productive" sectors of the population into the modern economy, increasing the levels of worker productivity through technical training. That is, in one way or the other, education has been used by the state and some private and international agencies to support a strategy of development that gives answer to needs which are not those of the people but rather those of capitalist economic production and cultural reproduction.

Samuel Bowles maintains that in poor countries, educational policy contributes to economic inequality because, in order to confront popular pressure for democratizing the school system, the governments of those countries - impoverished by dependency and capitalist development - are turning to inexpensive alternatives to universal education.

> The result of this counter-pressure is often a dual educational system: a brief and second-rate education for many, and a relatively expensive education for just enough to promote productivity and prevent significant labor scarcity in the capitalist mode. "Non-formal" education, currently popular among international aid-giving agencies, holds the possibility of further institutionalizing the dual educational structure by fostering inexpensive practical manual training for the many and more conventional class-room education for the few [Bowles, 1984, pp. 219-220].

In other words, the educational models set up by the governments in the dependent Latin American countries either prevent the popular sectors from having access to school or offer them a kind of education which is contrary to their class interests in a double sense. Ideologically, education is aimed to reinforce the mechanisms of domination necessary to accomplish an effective insertion of popular sectors into the capitalist system of production. Technically, it is poor enough to prevent the improvement of material conditions of the popular sectors beyond the provision of the necessary skills to working productively as a labor force.

The multiple roots of Popular Education. But neither the state nor the dominant classes are the only agents responsible for implementing educational models in Latin America. On the contrary, as Adriana Puigróss and Marcela Gomez [1986] assert, the educational systems of Latin American countries are constituted not only by the dominant

educational models, but also by all the educational processes that take place within society. In other words, different educational models coexist in a conflictive relation as an expression of the struggle for hegemony within our complex societies. This coexistence, which reflects at the cultural level the struggle between domination and resistance, generates not a few conflicts and contradictions between dominant and dependent countries, between hegemonic and subordinated classes, and between urban and rural areas within Latin American countries:

> There is not a pacific, symmetrical, or even complementary relationship between them (different educational models). On the contrary, they are intrinsically linked with both the socio-economic process and the political strategies produced by different social classes [1986, p.15].

Along the same lines, Brandao [1984] points out that the history of education in Latin America is not a linear sequence of education models which emerge in response to the previous one. On the contrary, in the same social-economic formation, "outdated" educational models may coexist with both hegemonic and emerging models. So, to understand the emergenc e of Popular Education, we have to take into account that it is the result of a dialectical interchange among various experiences occurring in the same social space. Accordingly, Brandao identifies seven distinctive categories of activities which could be considered to be roots of Popular Education in Latin America:

1. Communal forms of education immersed in the daily life of working sectors of the society. This kind of education is the result of the systematic reproduction of popular knowledge through productive practice, social interaction (at family community levels), and cultural reproduction.

2. The educational character of both the process and the results of the people's organizing and mobilizing experiences. This education (for, through, and from organization and mobilization) is one of the ways individuals and groups from the popular classes advance from an exclusively economic practice to a political praxis.

3. Popular organizations recruitment of educators and other professionals in order for them to undertake educational programs under popular institutional control and for the purposes of the popular organizations.

4. Educational programs promoted by social agencies, specially from the civil society (universities, churches, intellectuals, professional associations, cultural organizations) which define themselves as committed to the political project of the popular

classes. Within this category there are two modalities:

a) Agencies with their own educational programs for the popular sectors. Those projects will supposedly be gradually assumed by participants.

b) Agencies acting as educators, implementing programs controlled by popular organizations.

5. Institutional agreements between organizations of the civil society and sectoral agencies of the state at the local level for cooperation in specific sectors (health, agriculture, etc.)

6. In some cases in Latin America even particular sectors of the state promote experiences which, at the local level, can be converted in Popular Education programs. This can occur in those countries where the political circumstances make possible the participation of groups of the opposition in municipal or provincial councils.

7. Some national governments define as Popular Education: a) educational programs for adults, popular groups and community organizations; and, b) a whole national project as a redefinition of the political foundations of the system of reproduction and transference of knowledge and values.

The diversity of the sources to which Popular Education can trace its roots partially explains the ambiguity of the concept we are going to analyze. Moreover, if we take into consideration that the concept "Popular Sectors" includes a variety of social groups which play different roles in the society, it is not surprising that under the name of Popular Education we can find very dissimilar strategies that, in spite of their evident differences, share the claim of making contributions to the construction of a new society through a participatory educational methodology. Residues of each one of these strategies can be found in Popular Education as it is understood today, generating in some cases tendencies which deviate from the purpose of being a critical education in the service of the transformation of the society according to the interests of the popular classes.

However, some **common characteristics** of Popular Education can be identified through the description and analysis made by practitioners and scholars of various experiences in Latin America. These characteristics, which will be discussed later in this study, can be summarized in the following items:

1. Popular Education is **political education** committed to subordinated sectors of the society. Such a commitment

is reflected not only in the fact that it is directed towards them, but also in its endeavor to participate in an alternative political project of the popular classes for transforming society.

2. Popular Education is integral to **popular organizations** in the sense that organized groups are the participants of its programs. It has developed methods for promoting participation and collective action, and it encourages popular organizations as a tool for the popular sectors to become an autonomous social movement.

3. Popular Education promotes a **dialogical interaction** and mutual understanding between educators and educatees. This demands high levels of participation by the learners and the recognition of the role that their knowledge can play in both the production of a new knowledge, and construction of a new society. This **participation**, in turn, helps to raise people's self-confidence and their ability to take collective initiatives in their common interests. It also helps to break the vertical relationship typical of traditional education and to reduce the distance between intellectuals and grass-root communities. In this sense, Popular Education is deeply **democratic**.

4. Recognizing the capacity of the ruling class for reproducing and imposing its culture (values, meanings, and social practices) in order to legitimize the moral and ideological conditions for exerting political control over other classes, Popular Education attempts to unmask practices that promote such values as fatalism, negative self-image, individualism, competition, etc. It basically attempts to develop a **critical** ability by which people can distinguish the liberating forces of their culture from the oppressive ones, in order to promote cooperation and solidarity.

5. "Start from reality, and return to it in order to transform it" has become a kind of slogan in the Popular Education field. It illustrates that its programs seek to understand both the concrete conditions in which people live and the way they interpret them, in order to undertake actions for both improving their lives and for building a new society which responds to their interests. In this sense Popular Education is a **transformative** process based in *praxis* that incorporates research and action as integral components of the educational activity.

Research methodology

This study has two main components: First, a critical review of the theory of Popular Education in terms of its internal consistency and its development, and second, an analysis of a particular training program, in terms of its actual and potential contribution to the development of theory. Although these two components are interrelated and, in a certain sense, they overlap, two different procedures were required for implementing the study at each level.

Assessment of the theory. For this component I reviewed documents and literature related to the following areas.

1. Documentation of Popular Education Encounters. "Encounters" are activities in which popular educators from different places come together in order to collectively reflect on their own experiences and search together for new paths for action. Since during those activities popular educators generally make detailed descriptions of their programs, such reports were good sources for identifying common characteristics among different programs as well as some divergences produced by either their specific contexts or their different theoretical orientations.

For the purpose of making comparisons, I selected, as a sample of this documentation, reports of regional, national and international events:

a) The Second Regional Encounter of Popular Education of the Colombian South-West, carried out in Buga, Colombia in October 21 - 22, 1983.

b) The First Andean Workshop of Popular Education Methodology, carried out in Lima, Peru in May 19 - 23, 1986.

c) The Second Popular Education Encounter of Latin American and the Caribbean, carried out in Havana, Cuba in June 24 - 25, 1986.

2. Comparative Studies of Popular Education Programs. Some comparative studies of different projects have been done in Latin America for the purpose of identifying and tendencies in Popular Education. Well-known among scholars is the study of Garcia-Huidobro [1982], in which the author compares seventeen programs from six Latin American countries: Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and Venezuela.

The review of this comparative study was useful for: a) contrasting its results with those of my own review of the Documentation of Educational Experiences mentioned above, b) for selecting analytical categories utilized in it that could be useful for my own work, and c) for identifying theoretical foundations upon which those programs are grounded.

3. General Literature on Popular Education. In spite of the scarcity of comprehensive theoretical studies on Popular Education, there are a variety of sources (especially essays and short articles) that deal with particular conceptual aspects of this field. The diversity occurs not only in relation to the topics but also in relation to the approaches used to deal with them. The most common issues in the literature are those related to Methodology [Jara, 1984], Concientization [Barreiro, 1982], Popular Culture [Brandao, 1984], and Organization and democracy [Schmelkes, 1981]. There appear also, to a lesser degree, questions about the relationship between Knowledge and Power [Garcia, 1987], and between the State and civil society [Puigross, 1984], vis-a-vis the origin and development of Popular Education.

Analysis of a training program for popular educators. For the Case Study on the Training Program for Popular Educators both documentary sources and field-data gathering were used. I reviewed documents produced during its design and implementation to gain insights about how Popular Education theory has been understood and handled in this program. But the analysis of the program also required some procedures that differ from those utilized for assessing the theory of Popular Education. Fieldwork methods were necessary to understand the program as a mediation between

theory and the educational practice of the program itself as well as the practice of its participants (popular educators) in their communities. In other words, the review of documentation was complemented by other fieldwork data-gathering techniques: Participant Observation, Open-ended Interviews, and Guided Group Discussions.

1. Program Documentation. I first reviewed the document on the program design that included: principles, rationale, goals, curriculum structure, and guides for teaching and evaluation methods. I also reviewed other documents produced during the actual implementation of the program: teaching materials, evaluation reports, communications between professors and participants, participants' papers and other academic results.

This documentation offered information about the historical and institutional context of the program, its training strategy, and some of the program's implications in the popular educators' practice. It also was useful for examining how Popular Education theory informs the curriculum design and the teaching materials and methods utilized during the implementation of the program.

2. Participant Observation. According to Patton [1980], "the first and most fundamental distinction that

differentiates observational strategies concerns the extent to which the observer is a participant in the activities or program being studied" [P. 127]. Since I have been part of this program since its very beginning, "experiencing the program as an insider" was not a difficult task for me. For this reason, I thought that participant observation was an appropriate technique for complementing the review of program documentation during the two years of the workshop. It was useful for getting specific insight into the implementation of teaching methods, relationships between trainers and trainees, organizational dynamics, decision-making and other processes that cannot be identified through reviewing program's documents. Observing these aspects helped me to better understand theory-practice relationships within the program, that were essential for examining the role of training in theory development.

3. Open-ended Interviews. In addition to the information obtained by documentary review and participant observation, I tried to include the perspective of those people who conceived and implemented the initial idea of this program and those who are currently participating in it as trainers and trainees. This was done through making interviews open enough to provide a holistic picture of program dynamic and its internal relationships (theory - practice, content-methods, etc)

Interview questions were generated after reviewing the general literature on Popular Education and the program documentation, and after having done some participant observation, i.e., after having defined the main categories for analysis. They were directed mainly at identifying participants' opinions about how this program is, and could be, used as a means to develop and refine the theoretical foundations of Popular Education.

4. Guided Group Discussions. During the last two years (from August, 1989 to July, 1991), I worked as a trainer in this program, and I had many opportunities to organize group discussions during the implementation of some training activities. Similarly, as a member of the Research-Advisory Team of the program, I participated in group discussions with other trainers. Although these discussions were bounded by the particular topic of the training session or the R.A.T. meeting, the research questions of this study provided a general framework for my understanding participants' conceptions of Popular Education theory, and for them to express it in their own terms. In this sense, a by-product of the implementation of this technique was a collective learning about theory-related topics of Popular Education.

I also conducted three program evaluation workshops with participants from each program site (Buenaventura, Cali, and Tumaco), and participated in two three-day internal evaluation workshops organized by the Research-Advisory Team. These evaluation activities were tape recorded, which provided me with a great amount of information. This was important for making comparisons among data obtained through the different techniques described in the preceding paragraphs.

Analysis of the information

For the assessment of Popular Education theory and its relation to practice I chose, as categories of analysis, the concepts of participation, culture, knowledge, and power. These concepts are some of the most mentioned in both the literature and the discourse of practitioners, and they are central in any theorization of Popular Education. I also selected role of the popular educator and the relationship between Popular Education and political parties in the process of social change as issues within which the concepts mentioned above could be analyzed in relation to each other. Based on this analysis, I was able to suggest factors to take into account in order to re-define those concepts in a

way that allows Popular Education theory to transcend the level of mere descriptions.

In regard to the case study of the program I tried to translate these concepts into a micro-level context of training to see how they operate through the implementation of a pedagogic model, exploring connections between collective knowledge generation and distribution of power within the organization arrangement adopted by the program.

Organization of the study

In addition to this introduction, the study contains three main parts. The first one (Chapters II, III and IV) corresponds to the critical assessment of the relationship between Popular Education discourse and its practice. Chapter II identifies both the problematic and the main attributes of Popular Education, from the perspective of its practitioners, while Chapter III introduces the point of view of researchers and scholars who have shown a gap between theory and practice in this field, and who also have suggested ways to narrow that gap through systematization, research, and training. Chapter IV focusses on training, analyzing how the way popular educators are trained can expand the gap between theory and practice if training is

reduced to a mere delivery of educational techniques. This chapter also proposes some elements to make training a holistic activity, combining techniques with a broader theoretical foundation.

The second part contains both the description (Chapter V) and the analysis (Chapter VI) of the Training Program for Popular Educators at the University del Valle, understood as an attempt to link, through training, the theory of Popular Education to the practice of popular educators. The last part consists of general conclusions and recommendations for linking theory and practice in Popular Education through the re-definition and inter-relation of the concepts of popular knowledge, culture, power, and participation. It also includes some recommendations for the training program and suggestions for further research.

NOTES

1. In the Second Popular Education Encounter for Latin America and the Caribbean (reviewed in Chapter II of this dissertation), the participants manifested difficulty in formulating a single definition of Popular Education. "It has defined itself and will continue to define itself in a process of searching carried out within very diverse contexts, and inspired by specific requirements".

2. With respect to this, Jara [1984], while recognizing that Popular Education in Latin America is an undeniable fact of political life whose reflection and theorization has not been widely broadcast, poses the need to develop a conception - neither rigid nor universal - that which might act as a guide for various educational activities. And he concludes: "While Popular Education is still a concept in search of its definition, it represents the systematization and theorization of experiences which permit us to assume a global conception that must find its concrete and practical definition in the face of each reality and within each specific historical moment" [1984, p.4].

3. The term "Paradigm of Popular Education" has in this study the same connotation given by Rosa M. Torres in her book Educacion Popular: un encuentro con Paulo Freire. She uses this term to allude to the set of practices - including theoretical concepts, instrumentations, and applications - normally accepted by their agents as "distinctive" of Popular Education. These practices are becoming real models for action, establishing limits of legitimization for what could or could not be considered as "Popular Education"

4. Hegemony in the sense given by Gramsci, has the connotation of influence, leadership, and consent, rather than the exclusive sense of domination. Hegemony is related to the way one social group influences other groups in order to gain their consent for its leadership in the society. This concept gives foundation to Gramsci's argument that the modern state is not just an instrument of one class that uses it for its own narrow interests, but is instead a field of struggle for different classes.

CHAPTER II

TOWARDS A CHARACTERIZATION OF POPULAR EDUCATION

In this chapter I examine the problematic of Popular Education from the point of view of its practitioners. What are their achievements? What are the main concerns and difficulties they find in their work? How do they conceive principles and assumptions of Popular Education? What are some unresolved problems and issues they confront? That is, what are some questions remaining to be answered - and yet to be asked? In other words, I explore **what popular educators say Popular Education is** by identifying some characteristics commonly attributed to Popular Education by practitioners from various places in Latin America. In addition I review the results of some encounters of popular educators and published comparative studies on Popular Education programs, focusing on successes achieved and difficulties commonly encountered.

I collected documents such as minutes and conclusions of regional, national, and international meetings of popular educators. These activities are generally seminars, workshops and encounters in which Popular Educators from different places come together in order to collectively reflect on their own experiences and search together for new paths for action. They share lessons derived from their

accomplishments and failures, put knowledge and experiences at each other's disposal, identify common obstacles and better ways to overcome them, and pose problems and issues for further reflection. For making some generalizations and identifying the most common characteristics of Popular Education programs, I use as my sample the following activities[1]:

1. The Second Regional Encounter of Popular Education of the Colombian South-West, carried out in Buga, Colombia in October 21 - 22, 1983. This encounter was part of the Curriculum Design of the Training Program for Popular Educators at the University del Valle, Cali - Colombia.

2. The First Andean Workshop of Popular Education Methodology, organized by the centers QHANA from Bolivia and CEDECO from Ecuador and by the journal TAREA from Peru, and carried out in Lima, Peru in May 19 - 23, 1986.

3. The Second Popular Education Encounter of Latin American and the Caribbean, organized by *Casa de las Americas*, and carried out in Havana, Cuba in June 24 - 25, 1986. [2]

Although these kinds of activities represent an important contribution to the systematization and

development of Popular Education, especially given the lack of communication among groups working in this field throughout Latin America, it is important also to note their various deficiencies, among which the most remarkable are the lack of theoretical debate, and a limited, partial vision of the educational process.

These events generally remain at the level of a mere "socialization of experiences" within an atmosphere of cordial institutional and personal interchange lacking any profound theoretical confrontation or discussion[3]; and they are almost exclusively encounters of educators from which the people with whom they work are virtually absent. For that reason, they provide a one-sided account of educational interactions on the one hand, and a version of the popular sectors' reality mediated by their "educators", on the other [Torres, 1986].

However, reviewing these events allowed me to identify a common general problematic in the field of Popular Education in spite of the fact that they took place at different moments and at different levels. In Buga, in Lima and in La Havana, in 1983 and in 1986, popular educators asked similar questions and expressed similar doubts. Moreover, I included the review of a comparative study, made by J. Eduardo García-Huidobro, of 17 programs presented in a

Seminar-Workshop on Literacy and Adult Education Experiences from the Andean Region that took place in Lima, Perú, in December 9 - 17, 1980. The review of García-Huidobro's study allowed me to make some comparisons between the programs in his sample and those represented in the events of my sample, which enriched my own conclusions.

Encounter of popular educators from the Colombian South-West

This encounter was organized by the Popular Education Unit of the School of Education at the University Del Valle with the intention of initiating a participatory process for designing a training program for popular educators. The encounter had the following purposes:

1. To promote a collective reflection on the principles and methods of educational work with popular sectors.

2. To identify training needs among groups engaged in projects of popular education, rural development, and social promotion.

3. To collectively design an outline of the general components of a curriculum for a training program for popular educators.

Sixty-six people from sixteen Popular Education programs and three Universities attended the meeting, all of them working either in rural areas from the South-West Pacific Coast or in urban-marginal areas of cities like Cali, Popayan, Buga, etc. The distribution according to the focus of their work was:

Adult Literacy	Eleven (11)
Rural Community Development	Twenty-five (25)
Urban Community Development	Eighteen (18)
Small Business Training	Seven (7)
Health Promotion	Seven (7)

Results:

The first finding in this encounter was diversity of participants and activities. A lot of institutions, groups, and individuals, from very different perspectives and with different purposes, were doing educational activities with popular sectors. But besides teaching working-class people, these programs hardly had anything else in common in relation to their educational principles, objectives, methods, contents, and the visible results so far obtained.

So, the question was how to approach that diversity while addressing their most urgent needs. The very fact that these agents (educators) worked with popular sectors was to be

considered an important factor in their own personal and political development, and this commitment had to be taken into account and respected. However, there was clearly an urgent need to transform the relationship between the educators of these programs and their respective users in two senses: a) to evolve a less authoritarian and paternalistic relationship, and b) to develop their orientation towards taking a stance explicitly favoring the interests of the popular classes.

The themes were arranged into the following categories, for working in small groups:

* Characterization of Popular Education
* Guiding principles for working with communities
* Typology of educational-development projects
* Principles for training popular educators

For the **characterization of Popular Education**, the encounter concluded that the role of Popular Education could not be defined only in terms of the nature of the social groups in which the educational programs were embedded, but must also consider the kind of interaction between the program and their users as well as their respective purposes. This redefinition began by a critique of the uni-dimensional concept of "Popular Sectors" (subjects of the educational programs) as visualized only in economic terms[4]. From there,

the definition was expanded to conceptualize these sectors in cultural and political terms: as producers and depositories of a knowledge which informs and orients their action, and as bearers of a political project grounded in their own long-range interests.

Consequently, Popular Education was envisioned as a function of this political and historical project of the popular classes, and its role was therefore defined as that of collaborator in the construction of this project. This means that popular educators must understand the people's aspirations and interests; they must also learn how people are actually fulfilling their needs, and how they are overcoming the obstacles for implementing their political project. In this sense, popular educators must transcend the role of mere transmitter of knowledge and become researchers and promoters of social action, working together with grass-root organizations towards a social transformation that benefits popular sectors.

The encounter concluded that Popular Education, understood in such terms, has to be based, on the following **Principles:**

1. Popular Education is a collective learning, rather than a mere transfer of knowledge from intellectuals to

popular groups. The educator may have a more systematic knowledge, but the community has experiential knowledge (*vivencias*) and both of them are equally important.

2. Practice is a source of knowledge but it has to be critically reflected. So, the starting point of the educational program is community reality. Community organizations and their activities must be taken into account and respected, but in a critical way.

3. The relationships between outsider agents (educators) and communities must be democratic and "horizontal". The former should act as a facilitator and supporter of processes like collective learning, recovery of popular history and culture, and transformation of reality, undertaken by the latter.

Given the diversity of the programs represented in the encounter, the attempt was made to generate a **typology** which would make sense of their heterogeneity. Diverse factors included the issues around which Popular Education programs are set up, the origin and degree of organization of their participants, and even the nature and purposes of the sponsoring organizations. Although it was not possible to complete the task during this event, some bases were laid for future establishment of such a typology:

1. The program population's **relation to production** (peasants, industrial workers, unemployed, workers of the non-formal economy, etc.)

2. **Type of organization** of the popular groups participating in the educational programs (unions, women's or youth groups, non-organized, etc.)

3. Type of **institution sponsoring** the programs (church, government agency, N.G.O., international organization)

4. **Focus** of the program (literacy, health promotion, housing, small business, community development, etc.).

Ultimately, the encounter concluded that the **guiding principles for training popular educators** should be derived from a shared conception of Popular Education. Although such a conception was not clear by that time, the encounter agreed upon the following criteria for defining it:

1. Social sector within which the program is carried out (the program works with popular sectors of the society);
2. Manifest intention (the program explicitly promotes a radical social transformation);
3. Recognition of popular knowledge and culture; and
4. Organized participation of learners in the whole process.

These principles will be presented in more detail in Chapter V of this dissertation (Characteristics of the Training Program).

First Andean workshop of Popular Education methodology

The purpose of this workshop was to create a space for interchange and evaluation of educational experiences and their methodological issues. Its focus was the search for coherence between the characteristics of the participants in the Popular Education process and the methodology used for implementing the educational activities.

Results:

In regard to the participants who were taking part in these Popular Education programs it was found that all the institutions present worked with organized popular sectors in process of mobilization. Therefore the program activities were oriented to support such groups in their process of organization. The interchange of experiences about those groups allowed the workshop members to make the following generalizations:

a) The main factor which motivates the people to organize and mobilize was to meet their needs: both the need for surviving in the context of the economic crisis and the need for a permanent improvement of their living conditions.

b) In meeting their needs people not only demand responses from the government but also develop their own alternative solutions. In the latter case people have

displayed a great creativity and a tendency to look for integrated solutions to their problems.

c) Despite this tendency towards integration, people's solutions are still both local and sectoral ones. This is due to the lack of articulation between these activities at the local level and a more global strategy, including the popular classes as a whole.

d) Popular sectors constantly construct and re-construct their own identity, especially those who have migrated and have had to adjust and adapt new urban environments as places for living.

Referring to the intention of the educational work, the workshop members identified "the construction of a political project by the popular classes" as the horizon toward which they wanted to move. For the institutions this means recognizing that the population is actually the agent of the transformation process implied in its political project. In this sense, Popular Education promotes democratic participation and self-management in the development of popular organizations as a way to contribute to the construction of such a project without imposing a particular direction.

Some of the problems the educators have faced are related to difficulties in linking the theory of Popular Education with concrete practice. How do we articulate our theory in relation to popular knowledge? To what extent does our methodology bring us closer to, or take us further from, the recuperation of popular knowledge and its reproductive mechanisms?

Another difficulty has been to achieve continuity in being connected with the concrete social struggles of the popular classes. The practice of the educational programs is still intermittent and subject to the rhythm of periodic activities like workshops, courses, and meetings. Such sporadic activities do not correspond to the long-term continuous dynamics of the social processes. It is necessary to understand the real significance of the slogan "Start from reality, and return to it in order to transform it".

In relation to the impact of the national context on the situation of the popular sectors, common factors among the Andean countries were identified. Everywhere economic crisis means a higher level of impoverishment for the people and at the same time it demands a higher development of their creativity in the search for alternative solutions to their economic problems.

The disarticulation between political parties and popular movements was also identified as a common problem in the countries of the region. This problem affects the formulation of a clear project which incorporates the vitality of the popular classes into the programs of the political parties that supposedly represent them.

The cultural dimension was considered to be a very important factor. There exist differences between the social and ethnic groups represented by educators as outsider agents and the grass-roots groups with which they work. However, the workshop participants recognized the difficulty they have had in grasping and dealing with this difference, and there have been enormous problems in attempting to integrate the people's perception of the world into their educational framework. They also recognized their confusion about why people from popular sectors adopt certain behaviors. But they realized that such an understanding is essential in developing a new methodology for education and research.

Discussing the need to improve their methods in relation to the situation described above, the participants chose three key aspects to explore: a) the role of the popular educator, b) methodology and the role of techniques, and c) the process of theorizing.

The role of the Popular Educator. In relation to the debate about whether popular educators should be "insiders" or "outsiders" to the popular movement, the workshop concluded that inasmuch as Popular Education is part of the popular movement, educators who insert themselves inside that movement assume its consequences and risks. However, such an insertion is full of contradictions related to power, knowledge, class

differences, and economic imbalances between Popular Educators and the people. Such contradictions may be resolved taking into consideration these criteria:

> a) Their starting point should be the process through which the people's experience, knowledge, and identity are produced. This implies recognition and respect for the rhythm and direction that people imprint upon their own processes.
>
> b) Their main role should be to encourage systematization and evaluation of popular experiences and knowledge, and to develop specific educational projects, contributing also to their own knowledge, with methods and tools appropriate to the people's concrete conditions. Their directive role in this process should be gradually reduced.

Methods and techniques. While acknowledging the positive role of participatory techniques in the development of self-esteem, self-reliance, autonomy, self-criticism, solidarity, and cooperation, it is important to avoid the tendency to apply them mechanically, separating techniques from principles or from purposes of educational practice. It must be kept clearly in mind that ultimately it is the principles and the purposes, not the techniques, that enable Popular Education to become a tool of liberation for the popular classes. So, as a strategy for avoiding the tendency toward a narrow vision of methodology as a mere stockpile of techniques, participants suggested recreating cultural elements from the popular traditions as educational tools, such as popular vision and ways of communication (legends, songs, stories, etc.)

The theorization process. The emphasis was placed on the popular experience as point of departure, and as a point of return, for educational activity. But without a clear understanding of the need for the people to raise their level of comprehension of their own reality, there will be a risk that Popular Education remains simply focused on the immediate needs of the population. In order to avoid this risk, and to accept the existence of popular knowledge with a greater or lesser degree of systematization, the production of theory was understood in this workshop as the dialogue between popular and scientific knowledge. Through this dialogue, new concepts are generated and new instruments of analysis are being refined. Such concepts and instruments make possible a deeper understanding of the social practice of the popular classes.

Encounter of popular educators from Latin America and the Caribbean

In June of 1986, representatives of 28 centers of Popular Education from 15 Latin American and Caribbean countries met in Havana, Cuba, with the purposes of interchanging experiences in relation to the development of Popular Education in different contexts and creating a space for exploring the following three aspects: a) The relationship between Popular Education and political and organizational processes; b) The

methodology of Popular Education; and c) Popular Education, culture and communication.

Results:

In relation to the issue of the relationship to political and organizational processes, this encounter arrived at the following conclusions:

1. **Popular Education emerges from people's concrete reality.** That is, it can not be understood outside of the social, economic, political and cultural contexts of Latin American countries and much less outside of the daily struggles of the people whose lives are being shaped by those contexts. These include struggles against unemployment, poverty, repression, fear, terrorism and other expressions of domination.

2. **Popular Education is a political and historical practice** because it takes part in the challenges, risks, problems and achievements that popular movements face in their historical development. Its political sense is given by its contribution to the popular sectors' ability to take their destiny in their own hands.

3. **Popular Education supports people's organizations** rather than simply promoting changes at the level of consciousness raising. This support expresses itself by defining collectives, not individuals, as the focus of its action; by promoting values such as solidarity, justice, equality, etc. through its participatory approach; and by training people in a democratic type of leadership.

4. **Popular Education is becoming a continuous process** more than isolated experiences. In this encounter three tendencies were observed. There has been movement a) from isolated and sporadic workshops towards long-term programs; b) from a non-formal adult education approach towards a new concept of education as a whole, even affecting the official educational system; and c) from a general approach to educational content to more specialized and inter-related problems.

In relation to methodology, the workshop participants agreed in defining it as an educational, political and organizational strategy aimed at supporting the people's individual, social and political development, achieved by them in the process of transforming themselves into active subjects of a historical project. Methodology becomes an important issue because it is not only **what** people learn, but **how** they learn and interact that matters for promoting values like

social justice, equality, cooperation and solidarity. It is a question of process over content.

Finally, in relation to the issue of culture, the encounter concluded that in popular culture opposing elements co-exist. For instance, alienating elements from the dominant culture that prevent people from identifying themselves with their own community co-exist with critical elements that allow them to impugn hegemonic values and ideology. Popular Educators must learn how to work with both in order to intervene in the former and to reinforce the latter.

A comparative study of Popular Education projects

In 1980, García-Huidobro [1982] undertook a comparative study of 17 educational projects developed among rural communities from 6 Latin American countries (Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador, Perú, Bolivia and Chile). These projects were presented and discussed in the "Seminar-Workshop on Experiences of Literacy and Adult Education in Rural Areas from the Andean Region of Latin America", in December of the same year. A review of its conclusions is included in this chapter in order to compare them to the results of the encounters mentioned in the foregoing sections, and to corroborate my observation that in spite of the diverse

contexts, the problematic of Popular Education presents common features as a Latin American phenomenon.

The author points out that in spite of the diversity of the contexts within which the projects operate, their common characteristics disclose the emergence of a new educational paradigm in the region. These characteristics are:

1. These educational projects and programs take, as a starting point, the concrete situation of the participants and their historical background, and they are aimed at raising participant consciousness about their economic and social context.

2. They resort to group, cooperative, communitary, organized, and democratic procedures.

3. They promote a "horizontal" teacher-student relationship

4. Their educational activities are closely bound to transformative action.

5. In spite of their appropriation and adaptation of theories and techniques generated from outside,

they have a high degree of creativity in developing their own methods.

6. These programs and projects have diverse institutional bases: N.G.O.s, churches, public institutions, international funding agencies, and ministries of Education. Sporadic cases come from grass-root community organizations.

7. The participatory nature of these programs, their objectives and their theoretical foundations are leading to a questioning of orthodox methods of planning, and evaluation.

In spite of the above-mentioned attributes, and despite the fact that many of them coincide with the principles of Paulo Freire's concept of *Educacion Liberadora*, Huidobro maintains that these features by themselves do not guarantee that the programs are truly "liberadores" instead of "integradores". Participation inside the status quo is quite different from participation to promote consciousness-raising and critical and transformative action.

To avoid this ambiguity, the adjective "popular" must be qualified in order to re-define the characteristics previously mentioned. First of all, the term **popular** has a clear

political connotation: it does not refer just to poor people, but to a social group formed by different classes that share the common denominator of being oppressed in economic, political and ideological terms.

Secondly, the term "popular" implies the need for formulating a national historical project aimed at the construction of a more fair and egalitarian society. This connotation sets Popular Education in the realm of the struggle for a new hegemony and orients it towards helping the popular classes to have access to a new collective identity.

Placing Popular Education in the terrain of the struggle for hegemony poses the problem of how to establish links of solidarity among diverse social groups that, for historical reasons, could share the same political project. This means that Popular Education must not have a localist scope but must support social movements of a popular character.

In synthesis , according to García-Huidobro, Popular Education is a tool which popular sectors can utilize to construct their autonomy in the face of the domination of hegemonic classes as much that it can be understood as: a) an educational ideology that encourage people's consciousness raising and political and social participation; b) a pedagogical strategy that uses participatory methods, and

provides technical tools for solving concrete participants' problems; and c) a political agenda for reinforcing the identity of the popular sectors, valuing and preserving their culture, and linking educational activities to their organization and mobilization.

Characteristics of Popular Education

Despite the limitations mentioned previously (Pg. 30), the encounter/workshop activities reviewed in the preceding section make important contributions for understanding and systematizing Popular Education experiences in Latin America. By identifying their common features and analyzing the main issues generated by conceptual divergences on particular aspects of Popular Education, we can arrive at some conclusions about the characteristics of Popular Education

1. **Popular Education is a political enterprise.**

With varying degrees of emphasis, all the cases attribute to Popular Education the character of **Political Action** committed to the advancement of popular classes of society. It is a practice that shares the challenges, accomplishments, and problems faced by popular movements in the process of changing various oppressive situations. This practice finds its political meaning in helping the popular classes become protagonic actors of the process of social transformation, and

defines its objectives as the generation of changes at the level of popular consciousness, and the strengthening and enrichment of the organizational life of the popular classes.

As an integral and on-going process Popular Education is seen less and less as a series of isolated activities, courses or workshops. Because its starting point is based in the living reality of the people, it evolves into a process which integrates various dimensions and which are sustained over time. This view of Popular Education affirms that people never stop educating themselves, since life, simply because it continually unfolds, constantly generates educational needs in the most diverse fields and situations. This means that Popular Education must encompass all aspects of popular life and address them, utilizing multi-purpose processes which combine research, historical cultural recuperation, critical recognition of reality, and training in communication skills.

2. **Popular Education and popular organizations.**

Popular Education is a collective effort. Its collective nature means not only that it is oriented towards group rather than individual solution of problems, but also that Popular Education promotes the consolidation of **popular organizations** which enable people to build a social force for radical social transformation. The role of Popular Education in supporting popular organizations is not only a natural consequence of its

class character, but also an exigency of its ideological dimension. According to Vio-Grossi [1981]:

> In most Third World countries individualism is not only promoted but is even imposed. Solidarity and cooperation, basic requirements for organizing, are discouraged. Popular Education, on the contrary, energetically stresses the need for approaching the learning process and the subsequent action in a way that promotes cooperation and common action. [p.26]

In the Andean Regional Workshop the educational practice of Popular Education was considered as concomitant to the organizational process. These activities could take the specific form of training in technical and organizational aspects, of creation and development of methods and techniques to promote participation and expression, of the recuperation and systematization of values for promoting the restitution of cultural values and popular identity, etc.

In the same direction, the encounter in Cuba emphasized the importance of Popular Education to work within and for popular organizations to analyze and transform their practices. Its educative tasks, the encounter concluded, should include the formation of leaders, understood as educators; the development of skills pertinent to a collective style of leadership; and the creation of links between those who are already organized and those who are not.

According to the conclusions of the Latin American encounter in Cuba, the connection between education and

organization is clearly seen in the case of Nicaragua, where Popular Education was a strategy for democratization through the development of people's capacity to understand and analyze reality in order to act upon it. This connection has to recognize also the different roles that both education and organization have in the process of social change. Popular Education has its role at the level of consciousness-rasing while the organization has its function in providing direction to political transformation. As Freire said in a dialogue with Ira Shor,

> liberating education can change our understanding of reality. But this is not the same thing as changing reality itself. No. Only political action in society can make social transformation, not critical study in the classroom [Freire and Shor, 1987, p.134].

3. **Popular Education and popular culture.**

As a consequence of the characteristic mentioned before (Popular Education is grounded in the daily experiences of the popular classes and their organizations), Popular Education programs have strong links with the real world of the popular classes. Popular Education starts from the **Popular Culture**, includes in its programs the critical recovery of the history of the communities, their traditions and customs, uses the popular language and the local forms of communication, and promotes popular artistic expressions. It is important to be clear about this point in order to understand why Popular

Education uses a lot of non-written pedagogical techniques like popular theater, drawing and mapping, songs, poems and popular sayings (proverbs), etc. The reason for that is not only that people from the popular sectors often cannot read and write, but also because there is a conscious intention to legitimize popular forms of communication and to acknowledge the potentiality of popular culture.

4. **Popular Education is a process of re-creation of knowledge.**

Rather than a process of transmitting information, Popular Education emphasizes the systematization of people's practical knowledge (which has been traditionally dominated and restrained) and its transformation into a structured whole through collective analysis and discussion. In this sense, Popular Education and Participatory Action Research (PAR) are closely related.

Underlying both P.A.R. and Popular Education there is a ongoing concern with the kind of relationship established between ordinary people and intellectuals. This, in the final analysis, is related to the nexus between academic/scientific and popular knowledge. This relationship should be, according to both Popular Education and P.A.R., one of dialogical interaction which requires a mutual understanding and recognition of the contributions that both kinds of knowledge can offer to the construction of a new "organic" knowledge.

The need for this dialogical interaction requires high levels of popular participation, on the assumption that through real participation people raise their self-confidence and their ability to take collective initiatives in their common interests. Real participation also helps to break the vertical relationship generated by conventional education and helps reduce the difference between intellectuals and grass-root communities.

Participatory Action Research can play a very important role in the implementation of the Popular Education principle "To start from reality, and return to it in order to transform it" by promoting the participation of the people in the research and change of their own situation. This research is also important for creating a new knowledge that reinforces the emerging theory of Popular Education.

NOTES

1. I consider this sample to be a representative of these kind of events because its results are very similar to others I have reviewed. Moreover, they were encounters of **practitioners** and had different scopes: one regional within a country, another international (Andean Countries), and the last one with a Latin American scope. Results of other important events appear in other sections of this dissertation as references. An example is the **Workshop on Theory and Practice of Popular Education**, carried out in Punta de Tralca, Chile between March 29th and April 1st, 1982. This workshop had the purpose of analyzing the current situation and perspectives of Popular Education and Participatory Research, and advancing in the classification and systematization of these experiences, and was attended mainly by scholars and researchers, most of them internationally known like Rodriguez-Brandao, Felix Cadena, Fals-Borda, Vio-Grossi, García-Huidobro, Marcela Gajardo, Pablo Latapí, etc. Its results were published, as a book, by I.D.R.C., PREDE-OEA, and CREFAL [Gajardo, 1985].

2. A review of the Colombian Regional Encounter was made by Miryan Zuniga in the journal Reflexiones Pedagógicas, No.9, Universidad del Valle, Cali - Colombia, July, 1984. Pp. 60-63. The Andean workshop was reviewed by Maruja Boggio: "Practica Educativa y Sujeto Popular" in Tarea, No.16, Publicaciones Educativas, Lima - Peru, December, 1986. Pp. 8-14. This journal also reproduces the results of the Latin American encounter: Tarea, No. 16, Pp. 15-20.

3. In these activities, Popular Educators normally gather for four or five days and put together their experiences according to a guideline which includes the following steps:
1) Preparation of a summary of the work before the encounter.
2) Presentation, sharing the results.
3) Discussions in both small and large groups about different issues and implications of the work.
4) Elaboration of theoretical and methodological conclusions.
5) Design of an action plan for the future.

4. In economic terms, we understand **popular sectors** as those constituted by the social classes that are unable to do more than simply reproduce their material conditions of subsistence because they have been either alienated from the means of production or subject to other mechanisms which prevent them from participating in the process of capital accumulation.

CHAPTER III

PROBLEMS IN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THEORY AND PRACTICE OF POPULAR EDUCATION

The previous chapter is an attempt to approach the Popular Education characteristics as understood by practitioners, to "hear" what they say when they get together in encounters and workshops. In this chapter I would like to introduce the perspective of researchers and scholars who have studied this field and made contributions to both its theory and the development of its practice. In addition to making some characterizations that help us to understand Popular Education, these researchers have called practitioners' attention to the gap between the discourse and the action in the field, and to the pernicious effects of this gap on both theory and practice. And even more important, they have helped practitioners to open new roads in the field, challenging them to undertake the task of closing this gap themselves.

So, in this chapter I will first review some typologies and characterizations which attempt to make sense of the diversity of programs and projects within the field. Later, I will examine both some contradictions identified by researchers within the common characteristics attributed to Popular Education, and some debates that have emerged in

order to resolve such contradictions. Finally, I will present some current issues emerging not only from the development of these debates but also from the attempts to elucidate such contradictions: issues related to community participation, popular culture, power, knowledge, organization, and the role of popular educators in the process of social change.

Typologies of Popular Education programs

Many authors, instead of defining it, characterize Popular Education on the basis of certain common features of its programs. Marco Raul Mejía [1988], for example, characterizes Popular Education programs according to their emphases, identifying the following categories:

Assistential Programs ("Band-aid" Programs). These programs focus on the delivery of services to poor and marginalized sectors of the population, fulfilling or complementing the role of the state without taking any critical or analytical stand. They do not address the underlying causes of the situation they seek to ameliorate.

Critical-discursive Programs ("All talk, no action").

Contrary to the former, these programs emphasize a critical discourse against the status quo but without any effective transformation of participants' concrete reality.

Usurped Programs (Take-over or sell-out). Sometimes programs with both alternative approaches and critical discourse are co-opted by the same system they try to criticize.

Populistic Programs (Cult of The People). When the discourse and the practice of the programs are constructed upon an a-critical vision of the popular sectors, glorifying popular traditions and a notion of "historical purity".

Communitaristic Programs (Tunnel Vision). Theory and practice focus on micro-processes at the local community level with no attempt at linking to broader concepts and processes of power and knowledge.

Liberating Programs (Practice what they preach). These are programs with a clear vision of a transformed society, and use that vision as a "North Star" to generate operating principles consistent with that vision to guide their practice. These are the genuine Popular Education programs, according to Mejía. Yet in order for them to be truly

liberating programs, they must combine the following elements:

1. An explicit link to the concrete reality in which the program is inscribed.

2. A political intention guided by an explicit ethical option

3. A dialectical pedagogical method that links theory to practice

4. An explicit relationship among education, popular organization and social practice

5. Coherence between educational and political conceptions, and manifestation of both in the Methodology. [Pp. 11 - 13]

I find Mejía's characterization of limited use as an explanation, and see it as even equivocal as a classification. A given program could be co-opted precisely because of its populistic nature or its communitaristic approach. (And yet, what is, in reality, the actual difference between these two types of programs? Could not a single program embody characteristics of both?) It is also unclear if there is any relationship among the different types of programs. For example, can an assistential or a critical-discursive program evolve into a liberating one? Under which conditions? The usefulness of this characterization, apart from providing some criteria to evaluate the liberating character of a program, lies chiefly, as we will see later, in pointing out that the discussion in the field of Popular Education has at different times been related to

the discussion among different types of programs described in this typology.

In another level of analysis, Rodriguez-Brandao [1989] proposes to leave the terrain of definitions and intentions and to consider what programs actually **do** in practice, "which is the challenge of the good intentions" [P. 81]. Therefore, he categorizes the Popular Education activities into a more heuristic typology, using the focus of action as the differentiating reference point. His categories are:

Popular Education as direct pedagogical action. This category includes those projects which attempt to improve the educational level of the popular sectors through a kind of parallel track to the educational system for particular groups within those sectors (i.e. literacy and post-literacy programs). A common example is the indigenous education programs that try to offer an alternative (from the ethnic perspective) to the standard "schooling" provided by official educational systems.

Popular Education as the political dimension of sectoral activities. These programs begin by professionals providing technical assistance to popular groups implementing development projects linked to specific areas within the productive sector (eg. Agricultural coops., small business)

or to other sectors (health services, legal assistance, housing, etc.). They evolve into efforts of organization and political participation on behalf of these respective sectors (eg, groups for the defense of the rights to land, housing, health services, etc.)

Popular Education as training of class agents. The origin of this category lies in the traditional "leadership training programs", more recently transformed into technical training as subordinate to political orientation. These programs aim at providing technical and theoretical knowledge which, while seeking a material improvement of living conditions, also foments a historical critical awareness affirming personal, collective and class identity. They differ from other technical training programs in that they do not attempt to make their trainees "more productive" (and therefore more "integrated" into a system of production and power relationships which in fact oppresses them) but instead to make them more autonomous and critical participants in their social and political habitat.

Popular Education as community action. This is one of the most common type of programs[1] and its main focus is "Community Participation". It is typically characterized by the following premises:

a) The starting point is the local reality of the participants. This means centering educational activities around their own individual and collective experiences, which are critically assumed as an element of reflection for change.

b) Pedagogical activities are closely linked to concrete action in its immediate context.

Two central ideas underlie this approach. First, every popular community has the potential to organize and to create solutions to its particular problems. And second, with incentives and the production of adequate knowledge the community will find grounds and alternatives for making decisions about the direction of its own mobilization.

Popular Education within a popular movement: This category encompasses programs that have an explicit and unmistakable commitment to an educational practice oriented towards the construction of popular power. This commitment is expressed as the contribution to the construction of a deeply democratic society, in economic and political terms, and presupposes that popular movement is the "distinctive site" of Popular Education. Popular movements are not merely community organizations with certain participatory characteristics:

> They are the affirmation of the actual historical viability, and the need for the popular classes to generate their own endeavor of representation and struggle, disengaging themselves from programs imposed, or at least suggested, by external forces [p.91].

These programs are, according to Rodriguez-Brandao, the most essential expression of Popular Education. The programs grouped in the former categories are either tributaries of this one, or tendencies that have the "popular movement" as a horizon toward which they will conduct their activities within specific sectors (education, health, religion, production)

This typology allows us to arrive at two conclusions: a) It is not only specific pedagogical actions that constitute the field of Popular Education since every social practice undertaken by intellectuals or professionals committed to the popular classes has an educational dimension inasmuch as it conveys a knowledge relationship. And, b) different types of programs can converge into the Popular Education field to the extent to which they merge popular movements with a perspective of social transformation. On the horizon of the popular movement lie the forces which can transform other types of programs into an authentic practice of Popular Education.

Rosa M. Torres [1988], from another perspective, recognizes that, in spite of the diversity of conceptions and emphases exhibited by various programs, there is a fundamental consensus in relation to a series of elements considered as pertinent to the Popular Education field.

These elements give a demarcation to the community of popular educators, as well as a sense of belonging. Accordingly, for a program to be considered a Popular Education program it must have the following features:

A pedagogical-political character. Popular Education is a social practice which deals with knowledge but has political purposes. It aspires to provide tools for empowering popular groups and for helping them to become owners of their own destiny. In this sense, education becomes an instrument for liberation.

A transformative character. Popular Education claims to be a contribution to social change and therefore to be an instrument for building a new society according to the interests and aspirations of the popular classes. For this reason action is at once both a guiding principle and an objective of its pedagogical and political endeavor. Concientization, participation and organization constitute three key aspects for transforming people into protagonists of their own historical project.

A popular character. The adjective **Popular** which qualifies this kind of education is not only related to the beneficiaries of its action, who are popular groups, but also to its objectives, contents and methodology. Its

objectives are directed towards contributing to the construction of a socio-political project by the popular groups. Its **contents** emerge from the reality of these groups and value their knowledge and experience. And its **methodology** looks for coherence between the values of that project and its daily educational activities. This coherence makes Popular Education a kind of "living laboratory" in which participants exercise some of the attributes of the social relations they want to promote in a new society.

A democratic character. Popular Education aspires to make a rupture with the top-down and authoritarian model of "banking education", and **dialogue** becomes an important tool for that. The point is not only to educate for democracy but also to exercise it, bringing into the educational practice its democratic postulates. This is why collective participation is demanded not only in action but also in the process of production and appropriation of the knowledge necessary to undertake action.

A "processual" character. Given the characteristics previously mentioned, Popular Education cannot be conceived of as merely specific isolated actions, but rather it must be envisioned as a permanent activity with a long-range

perspective. For this reason strategic planning, monitoring and evaluation are important components of its activities.

A holistic character. Popular Education explores ways to integrate aspects of knowledge, which have been traditionally compartmentalized by disciplines, with a holistic perspective, and to break with the dichotomies between theory and practice, between manual and intellectual labor, between education and work, between education and quotidian life, between public and private spheres, between education and politics, etc. Its holistic nature also makes it transcend traditional educational sites (schools), incorporating popular organization and other spaces and social practices as an integral part of its action.

A systematic character. To accomplish its goals, Popular Education has to be a rigorous and systematic activity. In this sense research, reflection on action, theorization, systematization, and training are tasks that must be taken seriously to develop the field.

The preceding characterization is useful not only for making sense of the diversity of practices included under the umbrella of Popular Education. It also can be utilized as a set of criteria for evaluating either a given program or the general practice of Popular Education. In certain

sense we will see in the next section of this chapter where the relationships between discourse and action are analyzed in reference to the mentioned characteristics.

The gap between theory and practice

Reviewing the previous chapter, and even the previous section of this one, we can easily agree with García-Huidobro's affirmation that, in Latin America, Popular Education is becoming a new educational paradigm in the sense that there is a set of practices, including conceptual principles, applications, and procedures, which are normally accepted by their agents as distinctive to Popular Education. These practices are becoming models for action, establishing limits of legitimization about what may or may not be considered to be "Popular Education".

Nevertheless, Popular Education is showing a deficiency that is significant enough to have serious theoretical and practical consequences if it is not addressed. This is the growing gap between the discourse and practice, between what popular educators say Popular Education is and what they actually do.

This problem has been widely recognized and denounced by both scholars and practitioners in the field. Rosa M. Torres [1988] conducted a study in which she revealed many divergences between the discourse of Popular Education scholars and researchers, on one hand, and the activities of practitioners on the other. According to this study, while the "theorist community" (as she calls the former) has developed some notions, concepts, generalizations and characterizations about different aspects of Popular Education and has made a coherent discourse, the practitioners (popular educators) cannot use such a discourse properly for either explaining or guiding their practice.

Torres believes that some of the reasons for this discrepancy are: a) the terminology used by scholars, which is unusual for the educational level of most practitioners, b) the scope of generalization made by theoreticians, their connections to global issues that are outside of the confines of the local level, where popular educators generally act, and c) the emphasis practitioners give to action and their consequent eagerness for just techniques to improve such action. So, the theoretical discourse reaches the community of practitioners only as an incoherent set of generalizations perceived as having little use for their work.

This situation, Torres asserts, induces practitioners to a kind of "nominalism", that is, a substitution of names for concepts, words for ideas, verbalism for theories, thus discharging them (concepts, ideas and theories) from all their explanatory, predictive, and transformative capability. Nominalism functions as a vehicle for transforming the conceptualization of Popular Education into a justifying discourse that is used *a posteriori* to vindicate what it has already been doing in practice. But such lack of accuracy in using those concepts has pernicious effects on both theory and practice, making it difficult to assess Popular Education programs without establishing a clear distinction between what popular educators **do** and what they **say** Popular Education is, and even between what Popular Education **is** and what it **should be.**

Taking these differences into account, Torres extensively analyzes the discourse of the "Community of Practitioners", contrasting it to the generally accepted discourse of Popular Education (the written one), on one side, and their actual practice, registered in encounter and evaluation reports, on the other side. She concludes by asking the following questions as a way to disclose not only internal discrepancies within the discourse but also obstacles generated by these divergences for both theory and practice:

Is Popular Education education at all? To question the educative character of Popular Education could seem paradoxical. But the fact is that, because the accent has been placed on its participatory and collective features, the pedagogical reflection of Popular Education has been disregarded, reducing its problematic to methodological orientations and, even worse, to mere techniques. In other words, the content has been dismissed in favor of the method, and the problem of knowledge has been supplanted by the know-how.

This emphasis has lead to a view of the educator as a mere facilitator of a collective process who refuses to teach in the name of dialogue. This view does not contribute at all to the empowerment of popular sectors; on the contrary, it could result in denying one of the few educational opportunities most of these sectors have. To overcome this obstacle, Torres concludes, popular educators have to make a triple recognition

> a) popular sectors have legitimate educational needs; b) popular educators must understand and respond to those needs; and c) education has a specific role in people's liberation. [1988, p.26]

Is Popular Education critical education? Popular Eduction is supposed to be critical, analytical, open-ended, and problem-posing. However, Torres also brings many

examples in which she finds its discourse to be closed, normative, categorical, and far from problem-posing. It generates neither questions nor contradictions of diverse positions. Moreover, this discourse is often assumed a-critically by popular educators as "a truth revealed, irrefutable and unique" [p.35], and is applied as a formula. Thus, when actions fail there is a tendency to attribute the failure to the interpretation/implementation of the norms. The ideas / recipes which served as guidelines are however not questioned. It would appear that the "critical attitude" of the practitioners consists of a-critically accepting the "critical discourse" of the theoreticians.

The notion of critical consciousness is understood more as a criticism at the level of broad categories, not as an explanation of the problems under scrutiny, and even less as an attitude applicable to social relations in daily life (trainer-participant, program-users, etc.). Adding to the problem is the attitude of many intellectuals, which translates into a paternalistic and permissive mystification of all thing "popular", into avoiding confrontation and side-stepping the explanation and open discussion of divergent positions. All of these factors collude in limiting problem-posing to a superficial exercise which neither impacts on ways of thinking nor leads to a

meaningful analysis and change of daily and political practices.

Is Popular Education participatory education? One of the most-mentioned features of Popular Education, and yet one of the most ambiguous, is its participatory character. Almost every program claims to use participatory methods, participatory-action research, participatory evaluation, participatory materials, and participatory etc. Very few, however, ask questions like: participation by whom?, for what?, in what degree?, what are the possibilities and limits for participating?, and what do we - and the popular sectors - understand by participation?

> The concern about how to achieve participation seems to translate into a feverish search for techniques which help break through learners' inhibitions and their fear of expressing themselves, and not into an integrated analysis of the elements of incommunication which are produced within the educational process. [1988, p.28]

To talk about real participation in the field of Popular Education means the recognition and questioning of power relationships that exist between educators and learners; of their differences with relation to knowledge and the mechanisms to make decisions. It is not enough to adopt a permissive attitude towards opinions expressed by the group, nor to apply certain techniques which encourage everyone to speak up in classes or workshops. It is also

necessary to promote the critical confrontation of different opinions expressed by participants and trainers, and not to simply try to achieve consensus as soon as possible. Consensus too often represents the opinion of the more daring and the a-critical retreat of the more retiring members of the group. In relation to this issue the Latin American encounter in Cuba formulated the following question: To what extent, using participatory techniques, are we recreating practices of domination and indoctrination?

Unlike Rosa María Torres, who makes a synchronic analysis of the mentioned discrepancies, Marco Raul Mejía [1988] introduces a historical perspective to illustrate how these discrepancies or contradictions correspond to different periods in the evolution of Popular Education. His analysis shows how in each moment Popular Education underscored one particular aspect at the expense of others. This could suggest that it has been prone to wild fluctuations from one extreme to the other without being able to find an appropriate path or a healthy balance between these extremes. But Mejía's analysis is interesting in that it shows how each of these debates has made a significant contribution to clarifying what we understand today as Popular Education.

The advantages and limitations of such contributions can be illustrated with the case of **Marxist or Proletarian Education.** This was a kind of education, very common during the late 60's and early 70's, provided by leftist political parties to organized groups of the population (workers' and students' unions, popular and cultural organizations, etc.), with the purpose of expanding their own influence among those groups. Its declared goal was to achieve, through the assimilation of Marxist-Leninist theory, a consciousness raising, and rejection of the false consciousness injected by bourgeois domination among the working classes, as a way to create the ideological conditions for establishing a socialist society.

But the pedagogical strategy adopted by these programs was a replica of the traditional school pedagogy. The teaching methods were reduced to lectures and conventional classes in which someone who knew the theory transmitted it to those who lacked it. The program contents were determined by the party, and generally they were related to aspects of its political program. Ultimately popular culture was considered as negative inasmuch as it was dominated and alienated by the ideology of the dominant class. Therefore a change at this level could only take place after achieving a political change through which the

"proletariat culture" (which would then be embodied in the party) would be transformed into the dominant culture.

As an effect of the contradiction between revolutionary content and conventional methodology, theory became more and more separated from practice because it was understood as a complicated discourse difficult to relate to the daily problems faced by practitioners. As a result a mistrust of, and distaste for, anything sounding theoretical, academic or intellectual began to grow among practitioners. Practice suffered a swing to the opposite extreme, evolving into a series of random actions playing a game of blind-man's bluff.

However, from this period we learned that Popular Education must have an explicit ideal in relation to the kind of society it wants to achieve, use it as a counterpoint to criticize the oppressive and unjust characteristics of the current situation, and undertake a pedagogical work aimed to gain consent among different social groups in relation to both its ideal and the way to achieve it. But we also learned that such an ideal cannot be imposed on the popular sectors' idiosyncracy as an external force, and even less through methods contrary to the characteristics of the ideal itself.

But since reality is dialectic, the criticisms about the academic and impositional character of the proletarian education approach, as well as about its disdain for the popular culture, steered Popular Education to two opposite extremes. On one hand, the educational work started to emphasize the pedagogical interaction, through the use of group dynamics and other participatory techniques, at expenses of the transmission of new knowledge. On the other hand, popular culture became a very important notion for understanding differences other than those related to social classes: ethnicity, race, sex, language, values, etc. Also educational action began to be understood as a mediation between two different "collective symbolic structures" which transforms educational messages, rather than a transmission of information.

Popular Education and political parties

The relationship between Popular Education and political parties in the process of social change is an issue that allows us to understand both the inter-connection among concepts like participation, power, knowledge, and culture and the need to clarify such concepts in a close relation to practice in order to avoid what Torres calls nominalism.

Recognizing that any educational action is political in that it either legitimizes or challenges power structures, Popular Education claims to be committed to the empowerment of the oppressed sectors of the society. It also recognizes that it is not possible to seriously improve the living conditions of the oppressed people without changing their oppressive situation, and that such a change can only be undertaken by the people who are suffering such oppression. Consequently, its programs attempt to operate at two levels, improving the current conditions of oppressed people and looking for a radical change of the causes of those conditions. So, an important role assumed by Popular Education is to contribute to encourage popular participation and people's capacity to exert political pressure against the current system of domination. In Freire's words, Popular Education is an effort leading to the organization and mobilization of the popular classes in order to create popular power.

This stance is, however, a source of tension with respect to the relationship of Popular Education programs with diverse political projects adopted by popular organizations, because Popular Education, although it is a strategy with political content, is not - in and of itself - a political program. As the Latin American encounter in Cuba concluded, although the mandate of Popular Education is

not to take power anywhere, yet it is indeed an instrument which will assist the people in finding a path to do so.

In relation to this issue, the mentioned encounter proposed the following questions:

1. To what extent are the political interests of the Popular Education Centers becoming an obstacle to the autonomy of the popular groups ?

2. How to find a balance point between the needs of the popular organizations and the capacity of response of the Popular Education Centers?

3. How to be aware of the changes and development of the popular movements in order to make the educational action appropriate to their needs ?

In practice, the relationship between Popular Education and popular organizations has not been far from conflicts and contradictions. First of all, what does popular organization mean, exactly? A political party? A network of base groups? Is it necessary to promote new types of organizations, or should popular educators acknowledge and recognize popular ways of organizing?

This relationship has been especially difficult with the political parties of the working class, which, paradoxically, have made one of the most important contributions in the configuration of Popular Education in Latin America through their "Schools of Cadres" and "Study Circles" and which share with Popular Education the final

goal of transforming the structure of our societies. The core of this conflict lies in a divergent understanding of the status of popular knowledge and its role in social transformation. While Popular Education attempts to recognize, and start from, the way people understand their own reality, the political parties, as I stated in the previous section, have had the tendency to reproduce a kind of "banking education" in the sense of assuming themselves as the bearers of a truth, a truth which must be brought to the people who lack it.

María E. Wills [1989] claims that when "liberating education" was linked to a vanguard political party, education was envisioned as the action through which those individuals already liberated rescued the rest of the people from alienation. The former, owner of the truth contained in the program of the party, had the function to enlighten oppressed people in order for them to have access to genuine consciousness of their reality. The problem is that the content of such a "genuine consciousness" was defined beforehand [p.7], and this augmented in not few cases the distance between the vanguard - owner of the truth - and the people.

On the other hand, while the political parties have tried to define a clear direction for the popular movements

and have tried to make the link between their social practice and a critical theory, Popular Education has had the tendency to underestimate the importance of the theoretical knowledge to be gained from the social sciences, and therefore has avoided the discussion about how to translate that knowledge into action. This tendency has frequently resulted in an activism which reduces education into "steps to follow", and the pedagogical methods into the mere application of "participatory techniques".

But the contradiction between Popular Education and political organization is being resolved in a productive way for both political parties and popular educators: On one hand, Popular Education has pointed out the deficiencies in the way political parties traditionally related to the people, while on the other hand these parties are showing to popular educators the need for a clear political focus which permits establish links between the micro and the macro aspects of the social reality.

The role of the popular educator

Another issue that merits special attention is the contradiction between the role of the popular educator and the autonomy of the popular groups. Reflections on this

contradiction have generated conflicting messages to popular educators. On the one hand they should be truly committed to a certain goal, a political perspective, and a vision of a democratic society. On the other they should not impose their personal vision but instead should facilitate the process of developing a higher consciousness among the people of their own popular vision.

Since they ascribe a great importance to the principle of people's participation, popular educators have tried to avoid the role of traditional educators who "know everything", and who accordingly define the content of the educational activity and control the whole process. But this attempt to avoid manipulation has generated a tendency towards the opposite extreme. In that the role of the educator tends to disappear or is reduced to a minimum. Vio-Grossi has expressed this dilemma in the following terms:

> In basing educational processes in popular groups, the educator seems to lose a precise location and to transform him/herself into a mere spectator of the process [1981, p.74].

This tendency has some of its roots in a particular interpretation of Freire's critique of "banking education", especially in relation to his emphasis on the equality between educators and learners, and on the non-directive character of the educational process. In her interview to

Paulo Freire, Torres [1986] recounts numerous affirmations by practitioners and scholars who claim, based on Freire, that in Popular Education the difference between teacher and learner disappears, and that Popular Education cannot be a directive process. But Freire's own response to these issues shows the need for direction in the educational process while at the same time stressing the importance of avoiding manipulation:

> Any education - either authoritarian or democratic - implies a certain directiveness. In my opinion, the educator's directiveness, in democratic education, is limited by the creative capacity of the educatees. I mean: in that very moment when the educator's directiveness interferes with the capacity of the learner to create, inquire, search and ask questions, in that moment the minimum directiveness necessary becomes manipulation (...) For this reason non-directive education does not exist, as is stated in Pedagogy of the Oppressed [1986, p.42].

In the same interview, Freire goes on to point out the fuzzy thinking around the notion that there is not difference between educators and learners:

> When someone, as an educator, says that they are the same as their learner, they are either lying and demagogical or incompetent. Because the educator is distinguished from the learner by the simple fact of being an educator. If both were the same, they would not recognize each other [p.42].

It is important for Popular Educators to clarify this in their own minds. While it is certainly possible and essential to avoid an authoritarian relationship with

learners, yet this does not mean it is possible or even desirable to assume that no differences exist.[2]

A similar tension is expressed in the relationship between "outsider" agents and the popular classes. While some maintain that only members of the working classes (whose knowledge and consciousness have been raised through active struggle) can legitimately play the role of authentic popular educators, others consider that external change agents are necessary for linking the particular and local reality with the general and strategic dimension of social change.[3] According to Vio-Grossi, these tensions disappear with a real immersion of the intellectuals into the people's world. This immersion, Fals-Borda adds, should be guided by authenticity, personal honesty and commitment:

> In popular struggles there is always a role for intellectuals, technicians and scientists to fulfill. They have to demonstrate honestly their commitment to the popular cause by means of specific contributions in their own fields. This is the methodological complex based on the recognition of the existence of mutual ties between social practice and theory [1982, p.30].

Another important consideration is how the role of popular educators is shaped by their own participation in the popular movements. This issue is raised by Mario Sequeda [1987], who maintains that in Colombia, community educators and community promoters who, as a result of their insertion and/or participation in social movements, are

transforming themselves into popular educators. This transformation process is, according to Sequeda, due to the dynamics of popular organization itself, and it could be characterized by the transition from:

- an occasional activity to an organic practice
- an empirical activity to a practice based on the articulation between action and reflection (Praxis)
- an individual knowledge appropriation to a social construction of knowledge
- a naive reproduction of training models to the construction of a popular pedagogy.

Sequeda's point shows how the practice of Popular Education plays an important role not only in the consciousness raising of the local people but also in the transformation of the external agents working with them. But we have to be clear that practice by itself it is not enough for making this transformation. It is also the result of the reflection, both individual and collective, that educators are constantly doing on their own educational practice.

The recognition of the effects of praxis (the practice - reflection dynamics) on the transformation of their own role is a critical point for improving the activities of popular educators, and it is precisely in this point where the training program for popular educators at the University del Valle wants to contribute, taking the

experience of each participant and collectively reflecting upon it in order to enrich it with the contributions of other participants' experiences and knowledge . But before discussing this specific program, I would like to briefly review some general aspects of the training of popular educators in order to insist upon the idea that, given the appropriate conditions, the formation of Popular Educators can play an important role in linking the Popular Education theory with its practice.

NOTES

1. Forty-three out of the sixty-six people who attended the encounter from the Colombian South-West, indicated that they were working in Community Development programs. And seven out of fifteen projects studied by García-Huidobro were included within this category because their focus was "Community Action".

2. The clarification of the role of the popular educators and their relationship with people in the processes of "organic" knowledge creation, popular organization and political mobilization have been fostered by Gramsci's concept of "organic intellectual", by Freire's concept of "dialogical educator", and by the concept of "participatory researcher" developed in the field of Participatory Action Research. According to Cadena [1984], the main goal of popular educators should be to help people reclaim their collective history so that they can bring about the structural changes which ensure the fulfilling of their needs and wishes, both in their daily lives and on a broader cultural level.

3. But the debate continues beyond the relationship between "outsider" agents and the popular sectors, to question the very concept of "Organic Intellectual". According to another position, the organic intellectuals of the popular classes are not individuals but a collective expression of these classes' consciousness. This collective expression is realized through either the political party of the working classes or through the autonomous social movements of popular character.

CHAPTER IV

TRAINING POPULAR EDUCATORS: LINKING OR DETACHING THEORY AND PRACTICE?

The process of training popular educators offers an opportunity to examine how Popular Education theory has been put into practice in concrete programs and how theory can be developed through making appropriate links between the discourse and the practice developed within this field. It is, in fact, the analysis of programs for training popular educators that brought to light some theoretical problems and contradictions.

Rosa Maria Torres [1986] asserts, based upon her studies on Popular Education in Nicaragua, that it is increasingly less the rule to find agents from outside the community, individuals with formal academic background, acting as popular educators, which was commonly the case until fairly recently. Instead, popular educators are being recruited more and more from the grass-root level, from among people with no formal academic and pedagogical formation. This tendency, although consistent with the principles of an education from, by, and with the people, poses an important training problem and converts the formation of popular educators into a fundamental factor for the advancement of theory and practice in the field.

Nevertheless, as the same author notices, in actuality the training of popular educators has been reduced to the mere transference of participatory educational techniques to grass-roots educators. This lack of concern about an integral (i.e., both theoretical and methodological) formation of popular educators is converting training activities into another means for widening the gap between theoreticians and practitioners in the sense that the latter become recipients of finished formulas developed by the former rather than co-authors actively participating in the search for new ways to produce collective knowledge.

Instrumental Training: Characteristics and its effects

When training is reduced to an instrumental activity of only transferring techniques its negative effects are reflected not only in the practice of popular educators but also in Popular Education theory. One practical result of this kind of instrumental training is the reproduction of the training model itself through activities implemented by popular educators in their communities. An educator trained under this model could easily become a technician detached from the aspirations of the social group whose interests s/he supposedly should be serving. According to Paulo Freire, the more we emphasize methods and techniques, the

more we are trying to conceal the political nature of training.

> Thus we create the illusion that educators are technicians, and that as such, they are neutral; and that in order to be efficient what they need to know is how to manage technical instruments well [1979, p.6].

This contradicts all the fundamental principles of Popular Education mentioned previously, generating another discrepancy between its discourse and its practice, and, therefore, calling into question both the validity of such a discourse and the meaning of such a practice.

Towards a holistic model for training popular educators

If we agree that instrumental training produces such a result, we can logically infer that a more integral approach to the formation of popular educators is a necessary step towards achieving an appropriate link between theory and practice. This inference has found theoretical support in both Gramsci's notion of hegemony and his conception about the formation of organic intellectuals [Gramsci, 1970].

So, a critical review of Gramsci's ideas is useful for the following purposes: a) to support the critique of the instrumental model for training popular educators, b) to guide the search for principles and conditions for a

holistic training of popular educators as a contribution to theory development, and c) to refine theoretical instruments for examining the case of the Univalle Training Program for Popular Educators and its relations to theory.

According to Gramsci, the elaboration and diffusion of a world-view by the working classes must be accompanied by the formation of intellectuals linked organically to these classes, and their task will be to develop counter-hegemonic struggle using people's common sense as a starting point for the creation of a more rational philosophy. In other words, the creation of organic intellectuals of the working classes, and the consolidation of its hegemony, are two aspects of the same dialectical process because these organic intellectuals will be at the same time the **result** and the **agents** of counter-hegemonic struggle.

Gramsci's concept of hegemony allows us to understand the relationship between the State and the Civil Society, the relationship between the political parties and the masses, and the relationship between the intellectuals and the common people as educational relationships. Relationships of leadership and moral authority, and of struggle and resistance, not only of domination and subordination.

For Gramsci, the State is not only an instrument of the ruling class for imposing its political project. It is also a field of struggle for different classes in their endeavor for becoming hegemonic. Accordingly, the ruling class has to establish a certain ideological consensus among other classes in order to continue being "the ruling class". Education, mass media, cultural action, the church, and other moral and intellectual devices are major mechanisms for the achievement of the popular consensus implicit in the concept of hegemony. In Gramsci's words, "Every relationship of hegemony is necessarily an educational relationship" .

> Every state is ethical in as much as one of its most important functions is to raise the great mass of the population to a particular cultural and moral level, a level (or type) which correspond to the needs of the productive forces for development, and hence to the interests of the ruling class. The school as a positive educative function, and the courts as a repressive and negative educative function are the most important stated activities in this sense; but in reality, a multitude of other so-called private initiatives and activities tend to the same end - initiatives and activities which form the apparatus of the political and cultural hegemony of the ruling classes [1970, p.258].

Political parties are also tools for the fundamental classes in this struggle, and their tasks are related not only to the organization and mobilization of the classes they represent, but also to the attainment of consensus among other classes. But the achievement of consensus is,

to a large extent, an educational enterprise, and therefore education can be considered as a field of struggle and resistance in which the subaltern classes contend for spaces where they can elaborate and propagate a conception of the world organically associated with their own interests.

Popular Education can play a very important role in the realization of this counter-hegemonic enterprise and the preparation of popular educators can be envisioned as a contribution to the formation of organic intellectuals of the working classes.

In this sense political parties, and the organizations to which they provide leadership and coordination, as well as the social movements that they both could promote and support, are also "schools" where the subaltern classes learn, through political action, the principles and mechanisms necessary for evolving into hegemonic groups. And popular educators should work within and for both popular organizations and social movements, promoting democratic participation and self-management, developing capacities for democratic leadership and encouraging the construction of popular power. In other words, popular organizations and social movements are, at the same time, schools for the formation of popular educators (as organic

intellectuals), and milieu within which they exercise their educational and organizational functions.

Gramsci's ideas have implications not only for the formation of popular educators as organic intellectuals of the working classes and other subordinated groups, but also for the transformation of traditional intellectuals into "specific intellectuals" (as opposed to the "universal intellectuals" in Foucault's terms[1]), committed to the interests of specific subaltern groups. They also have methodological implications for the role of popular educators must play in the elaboration of a philosophy of the popular classes and therefore for the method for training them to play that role properly.

Instead of starting from criticizing the dominant conception of the world - because it influences the population as an external political force ("an element of subordination to an external hegemony"), Gramsci proposes, as a starting point, the critique of the common sense which is "the philosophy of non-philosophers" [1970: 328].

> The conception of the world which is uncritically absorbed by the various social and cultural environments in which the moral individuality of the average man is developed [1970, p.419].

But to criticize common sense in order to transcend it presupposes "understand it", and to understand it requires

one not to study it as a detached "object" of academic interest but to organically participate in the construction of an "intellectual-moral block which can make politically possible the intellectual progress of the masses and not only of small intellectual groups" [p.333]. To understand, for Gramsci, implies not only to know (in the traditional academic sense), but also to participate. And participation implies commitment, feelings and passion.

> The intellectual's error consists in believing that one can know without understanding and even more without feeling and being impassioned. In other words, that the intellectual can be an intellectual (and not a pure pedant) if separate from the people nation, that is without feeling the elementary passions of the people, understanding them and therefore explaining and justifying them in the particular historical situation and connecting them dialectical to the laws of history and to a superior conception of the world, scientifically and coherently elaborated, i.e., knowledge [1970, p.418].

These ideas are the expression of Gramsci's conception of the need for linking theory and practice as "a critical act through which practice is demonstrated rational and necessary, and theory realistic and rational" [1970: 365], and they constitute an important guide for training popular educators in a holistic way if we want to assimilate them to organic intellectuals. Organic intellectuals who will provide "the pedagogical and political skills that are necessary to raise political awareness in the working class,

and to help it develop leadership and engage in collective struggle" [Giroux, 1988].

The formation of this kind of intellectual cannot be reduced to the transference of group dynamics and participatory techniques to the popular educators because the technique without a conceptual framework, or without its underlying principles, does not guarantee any innovation. But to advocate for a solid theoretical formation does not mean to stuff the popular educators' heads with general notions and abstract concepts which pretend to explain reality on the basis of universal truths. A holistic training, on the contrary, must be based on providing theoretical and methodological knowledge, as well as technical tools, that allow popular educators to approach their daily problems as complex and inter-related issues. That is, to face daily problems as phenomena subject to constant transformation and multiple relationships and as having a double character of deficiency and possibility.

Animated by a search for integrality within diversity, holistic training emphasizes inquiry about relationships more than about isolated events. These includes relationships such as those between education and development, between local and national development, between knowledge production and political action, and between theory and

practice. This kind of training constitutes an opportunity for popular educators to:

a) collectively reflect on diverse aspects of their work,

b) acquire new theoretical, methodological and technical instruments, and

c) apply both the new elements and the result of their reflection to the transformation of their practice.

In other words, holistic training starts from the actual practice of popular educators, taking it as an object of reflection. It provides, at the same time, analytical tools that enable popular educators to critically review and conceptually reconstruct their practice, and then, it looks for ways for transforming it from a holistic perspective.

NOTES

1. Answering to a question about the role of the intellectuals in local struggles (as the specific sites of confrontation with power), Foucault [1980] asserted: A new mode of connection between theory and practice has been established. Intellec-tuals have got used to working, not in the modality of the "universal", the "exemplary", the "just-and-true-for-all", but within specific sectors, at the precise points where their own conditions of life or work situate them. This has undoubtedly given them a much more immediate and concrete awareness of struggles. And they have met here with problems which are specific, "non-universal", and often different from those of the proletariat or the masses. And yet I believe intellec-tuals have actually been drawn closer to the masses and the proletariat for two reasons. Firstly, because it has been a question of material, real, everyday struggles, and secondly because they have often been confronted, albeit in a different form, by the same adversary as the proletariat, namely the multinational corporations, the judicial and police apparatuses, the property speculators, etc. This is what I would call the "specific" intellectual as opposed to the "universal" intellectual [1980, p.126].

CHAPTER V

THE TRAINING PROGRAM FOR POPULAR EDUCATORS AT THE UNIVERSITY DEL VALLE: A CASE STUDY

For the purpose of this study, the training Program for Popular Educators at the University del Valle can be perceived as a deliberate activity, established with the express intent of contributing to the transformation of the educational, organizational, political and cultural practice of the popular educators in their communities[1]. The program aspires to achieve this transformation by combining two simultaneous processes: 1) the promotion of a collective systematic and critical analysis about the practice and experience of its participants, and 2) the acquisition and application of methodological, conceptual and technical tools appropriate to both such an analysis and to the change and improvement of their educational practice.

The explicit assertion that the program is conceived as a "deliberate or intentional act" reflects a debate within the field of Popular Education around the issue of directing educational action. To place this debate in its own context it must be kept in mind that in the Popular Education field, many people question the "intentional" nature of education as a value because, as they hold, no-one has the right to indicate a "correct path" to other men and women.

This position, as Jorge Rivera [1987] writes, developed in Latin America as a response to the impositional nature of the formal education systems. Those were converted into devices for accommodating the majority of the society to the doctrine of powerful minorities, and for inculcating and transmitting a set of values which only served to consolidate the interests of this dominant class[2].

Within this debate the program, while acknowledging the truth of the above affirmation, takes the stance that popular sectors deserve access to a quality education. We may contribute to this end by offering popular educators serious training which, without imposing a specific ideology, provides both a framework for critical analysis of the reality lived by popular sectors and tools for changing that reality.

Consequently, the program is aimed at practitioners of Popular Education with at least two years of practical experience at the grass-root level, and a minimum academic level of ninth grade. The program is offered in the mode of "distance education" in order to allow people to be trained without leaving their work places, which in most cases are located in either difficult-to-reach urban marginal areas or physically isolated rural communities. The distance education mode also facilitates a closer relationship

between the fieldwork of popular educators and the academic training offered by the university.

In a certain sense the program is also an intervention, though not necessarily intentional, in the sphere of the Popular Education theory. This intervention occurs when the program utilizes (in the form of principles, methods and procedures) knowledge developed in the field of Popular Education, and in effect provides a confrontation between that knowledge and participants' practice when experience is systematized through individual and collective reflection and discussion. This confrontation should generate a critical questioning about the theory of Popular Education as well as its practice.

Therefore the training program should be considered as a systematic activity that provides the challenge and opportunity to link the theory and practice of Popular Education. Ideally its existence should be lead to the improvement not only of the participants' activities as popular educators but also to the development of the theory of Popular Education as an explanatory and transforming discipline. In this sense to assess the program requires one to question its role, as a theoretical and practical activity, in the development of the theory itself. So, one has to inquire how the program is interpreting and dealing

with the principles of Popular Education, and what kind of contributions the program is making to the development of theory.

Historical background of the program

The history of the program begins with, and is interwoven with, the history of the now defunct **Popular Education Unit of the University del Valle**, an inter-disciplinary group of university professors who worked in the field of Popular Education and who perceived a need for the University to acknowledge, explain, and intervene in the growing educational current outside of the traditional formal system. The Unit was created in February of 1979 with the following purposes:

1. To do research on Popular Education, and specifically to examine the situation of Popular Education in the Colombian South-West;
2. To conduct training activities (workshops and seminars) for people doing community educational and social work within popular sectors;
3. To encourage the production, reproduction, and circulation of materials on Popular Education; and
4. To promote the development of networks among popular educators, groups, and institutions.

According to Zúñiga [1985], the creation of an academic unit for working on Popular Education inside the University can be interpreted as the convergence of personal histories

of professors with previous experiences in this field and who, in addition to full-time teaching [a], spent part of their free time working in community projects.

The initial group (three professors from the School of Education, including the author) identified, through informal contacts, individuals and groups from other departments who were working with communities. Ultimately professors from the following departments participated in the unit: Architecture, Public Health, Business Administration, Psychology, Sociology, Communication, History, and Environmental Engineering .

The activities of the P.E.U. were oriented towards:

1. Critically reviewing members' experiences with popular sectors in order to establish the foundations for a methodology of work for the Unit.

2. Taking an inventory of institutions, groups and individuals working in community projects in the region.

3. Coordinating training workshops on particular aspects of Popular Education for people working in community projects (health, rural extension, housing, co-ops, literacy, cultural promotion, recreation, etc.) [1985, p.6].

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[a]. In the University del Valle a full-time teacher must assume responsibilities equivalent to 40 hours per week. In their free time they may assume other professional tasks.

In September, 1981, the P.E.U. organized and conducted the First Regional Encounter of Popular Educators from the Colombian South-West for the purpose of exchanging information about Popular Education experiences in the region. From this encounter, Zúñiga summarized the following recommendations:

> 1. The P.E.U. should become a center of information, coordination, and documentation for the Popular Education groups and institutions of the region;
>
> 2. The P.E.U. should expand its offering of seminars and workshops on conceptual, methodological and technical aspects of Popular Education;
>
> 3. Each participant in this encounter should provide information about her/his program in order to organize a directory of Popular Education programs and to initiate a process of systematization of experiences [1985 p.9].

In this encounter we began to realize that the diversity in respective conceptualizations of "Popular Sectors" by the educators explained, in part, the heterogeneity of purposes and characteristics exhibited by the various programs. These ranged from those with a paternalistic and assitential character to those supporting organizational and mobilizing processes aimed at a radical social change.

> There is in each case a particular pedagogical relationship either vertical and authoritarian or horizontal and participatory, which generates a certain intervention strategy. Depending on this strategy, the role of the educator is understood either as an external agent, alienated from the people's needs, artificially inserted into the

> community through an institutional program, or as a catalyst of community organization processes. Also depending on the intervention strategy, the educatee is understood either as a passive receptor of the program action or as an active participant in all its phases: design, execution, and evaluation [Acevedo, 1982].

In view of this diversity and lack of common definition, the P.E.U. focused its activities not only on accomplishing tasks related to the commitments acquired in this encounter (seminars, workshops, publication of a bulletin, etc.), but also on defining a critical theory of Popular Education. As José Hleap [1991] maintains, this Academic Unit became an important scenery for a conceptual and methodological debate on Popular Education, for a productive interchange of experiences, for mutual support of its members, and for the undertaking of joint activities.

Participatory curriculum design

In the course of time, the idea emerged to establish an on-going training program for popular educators. This proposal originated from two different but inter-related sources. On one hand, both institutions and popular educators repeatedly requested training programs with more scope and continuity than the sporadic activities promoted by the P.E.U.; on the other hand, the professors of this unit needed a legitimate mechanism to link the academic work inside the university with a commitment to the popular

sectors and a desire to participate in their processes of ideological awakening, organization, and political mobilization.

According to José Hleap, the training program inherited from the Popular Education Unit its interdisciplinary working style, its vision of the role of the university within the region, its critical perspective of the national development model (and of university) imposed at that moment in the country, its constant search for appropriate pedagogical strategies for working with popular classes, its search for institutional spaces where Popular Education could be the object of reflection and where the relation between the university and its social context were seen as more than a simple extension service [1991, p. 59-60].

The curriculum design of this program was a participatory process undertaken by university professors from the P.E.U. and by popular educators and trainers of popular educators from various groups and local institutions from the south-west region of Colombia. This process may be viewed as an attempt to transform the relationship between the university and those sectors of the society traditionally removed from its academic life, making possible for them to participate in the definition of one of its programs.

José Hleap [1991, p.57] summarizes this process in the following figure:

STAGES	ACTIVITIES	RESULTS
1st.Stage	II Regional Encounter of Popular Educators (Buga, October 21-23 1983)	First Progress Report and formation Curriculum Design Team.
2nd.Stage	Discussion and definition of guiding principles for the Popular Ed. Unit (Jan. - Feb., 1984)	- First draft of the Curriculum Design. - Second draft of Curriculum Design
3rd.Stage	Workshops with people from projects of popular education, community development and community education (Potential participants of the training program)	- Third draft of the Curriculum Design of the Training Program (October, 1984)
PROCESS OF GETTING THE PROGRAM FORMALLY APPROVED THROUGH THE REQUIRED UNIVERSITY CHANNELS (FEBRUARY, 1985)		

Figure 1

Stages of the Curriculum Design

In October, 1983, the P.E.U organized the Second Regional Encounter of Popular Educators from the Colombian South-West with the purpose of involving future participants in the Curriculum Design of the Training Program. This encounter allowed us to identify some guidelines for the program, among which Hleap [1991, pp. 66-68] highlights the following:

1. One important characteristic involved distinguishing between the concept of "formation" versus training. Formation, a term often associated with the training of teachers as professionals within a formal degree program, was considered inappropriate for the Popular Education Program, given the under-development of Popular Education as a field of knowledge. As we then saw it, Popular Education at that time could not be categorized as a professional activity.

2. **Formation** was also considered less than appropriate, taking into account that participants were practitioners with experience in the field, and to conceive of the program as "forming" them seemed incorrect. The term "training" (in Spanish, *Capacitación*) seemed to reflect more accurately the idea of acknowledging existing skills and building on them. The In-Service-Training approach allowed us to recognize, and incorporate into the program activities, the experiences and actual needs of the popular educators.

3. Another key conceptualization was that Community Development should seek the autonomy of popular sectors and their self-management of community projects; as distinct from the approach to development in purely economic terms (Economic Growth)

4. The program should be thought of as a forum where the students may collect and/or recover their experiences working with the popular sectors in order to systematize them and to reinforce their practice. In this sense, it was seen as crucial that the program should support processes over development of technical skills.

5. The program should adopt a problem-solving pedagogical strategy, and its contents, activities and materials should reflect this.

The results of this encounter were processed by the P.E.U. and translated into both training needs of popular educators and training principles, contents and methods for popular education. These training needs and principles were compiled in a document and discussed with potential users of the training program in two consecutive workshops. The comments, observations, and initiatives that grew out of this discussion process enriched the preliminary proposal and led to the final curriculum design for the training program.

The program developed in this participatory design process passed next through the academic channels of the University, which included official paperwork and its

evaluation by the Curriculum Affairs Committee. As a result, Hleap affirms, certain adjustment were made to the original design "in order to minimize the differences between our proposal and the regular University programs (e.g., organization by semesters, specification of content sequence, formal inclusion of the program under the regulations of the School of Education, etc.)" [p. 69].

According to Hleap [1991], due to its status as a special non-degree program the Training Program for Popular Educators, after undergoing the above-mentioned negotiation process with the university, managed to maintain to a large degree, the characteristics provided by the Participatory Curriculum Design. However, some of its most innovative features were (to say the least) reduced, such as the possibility of a rhythm self-regulated by the participants, and the option to define the content sequence according to the area of work and training of the participant/popular educator.

Characteristics of the program

As we can observe in the preceding section, the **Curriculum Design** of this Program was a participatory experience not only for university professors but also for the program's potential beneficiaries, representatives of

some educational and social development institutions, and for some trainers-of-trainers working with popular educators. It was a landmark development since it was the first time the University del Valle allowed possible users to take part in the design of one of its programs.

Unlike other university programs, the **Guiding Principles** of this one explicitly define a particular class sector - the popular classes - of the society in favor of whom it will work, recognizing that this sector is composed of those who have been traditionally excluded from the educational system in general and from the university in particular. These principles also state that the program will acknowledge the validity of popular knowledge and take the aspirations of the popular classes as its starting point and as a guide to be followed in its development.

These guiding principles were derived from a conception of Popular Education that, by that time, we had articulated from the following criteria.

1. **Social Sector within which the program is carried out.** Popular Education programs are directed at those social sectors which have traditionally remained outside the coverage of the formal educational system. In our environment this includes such groups as the working

class (proletariat), workers associated with the informal economy, the unemployed of urban-marginal sectors, and poor campesinos and other inhabitants of the rural zones (farm workers, indigenous people, etc.) and the coastal regions (fishermen, miners, wood-cutters, etc.), all of whom are linked to traditional subsistence economies.

2. **Manifest intentionality.** Popular Education has an explicit purpose expressed as the need to create a socio-political awareness in the popular sectors, to organize and mobilize them towards the transformation of their reality on behalf of their own interests. In this sense, educational programs are usually associated with integrated development projects of broad scope and which encompass economic, political and cultural aspects.

3. **Recognition of popular knowledge and popular culture.** Popular Education recognizes, and incorporates into its programs, popular knowledge resulting from the accumulation of experiences lived by grass-root communities within the context of their social interactions and their relationships with nature. It equally acknowledges and respects popular cultural values and concerns itself with their critical

recuperation. This means recovering the language and local forms of communication, popular artistic expression, the history of communities and their customs and traditions. It also means unveiling those alienating elements and cultural values imposed by oppressor classes (e.g., fatalism, individualism, competition, profiteering spirit, fear of freedom, and low self-steem), and in their stead developing self-confidence, awakening the potential of popular sectors, and promoting activities around the values of fraternity, cooperation, and solidarity.

4. **Organized participation**. In recognizing the abilities and potential of the popular sectors we open the door to allow learner participation in the design, management,implementation, and evaluation of educational programs and in the making of joint decisions between coordinators and users of the program. This participation pre-supposes a minimum level of organization in order to define the community goals to be reached, to incorporate the various experiences of the participants into the development of the program, and to assume collective ownership of its results [Acevedo and Zúñiga, 1985. Pp.15-16].

These principles suggest a particular relationship between the program and its users, on the one hand, and among the actors in the educational process (trainers and students), on the other. The program manifests through its guiding principles that it will encourage that relationship by a constant effort to achieve the participation of the students (popular educators), and (if possible) of the population with which they work, in the implementation and evaluation of the program.

The **Goals and Purposes** declare that the program attempts to contribute not only to the acquisition of knowledge and skills on the part of the participants, but also to the production and development of knowledge on Popular Education, through the reflection and systematization of their personal experiences. The program will provide methodological and conceptual tools for the popular educators to understand and intervene in processes of social change. But at the same time, the program will systematize the experiential knowledge of the participants about their own reality. In this sense the program would build a bridge between the scientific and academic knowledge developed in the field of social science and the popular knowledge that circulates in the communities where the popular educators work. By doing so, the program attempts to contribute to both community development and to the advancement of Popular

Education theory and practice. These goals were formulated in the following terms:

> The program will provide popular educators with theoretical, methodological and technical elements which will allow them to
>
> 1. Orient their participation in social development projects on the basis of their comprehension of factors that shape the economic, social, and cultural reality of popular sectors.
> 2. Support community organizing processes which promote the community's participation in planning, implementing, evaluating and monitoring social development projects.
> 3. Foment and strengthen grass-root community groups and organizations in acquiring the technical training skills essential for supporting social development projects.
> 4. Analyze and evaluate social development policies and projects.
> 5. Design educational and social development models for popular sectors within specific fields of endeavor.

The program's **Content** is organized around concrete problems faced by the popular educators in their daily activities, rather than around academic disciplines. These problems are identified by the Research-Advisory Team (consisting of teachers from different departments), based on their contact with participants, then examined from a trans-disciplinary perspective, and finally worked out

through the popular educators' normal activities in their communities. This approach allows the incorporation in the resolution of the problems, not only of the academic knowledge provided by diverse disciplines but also of the popular knowledge provided by the people with whom the popular educators interact in their everyday practice.

The contents was organized into a **Curriculum Structure** constituted by 14 Thematic Modules (called Participatory Training Units) arranged into four components.

1. Socio-educational Component, including both guidelines for a critical analysis of socio-economic, political and cultural reality of the popular sectors, and theoretical principles of Popular Education. This component contains the following units:

1.1 Popular Education and self-reliant development
1.2 Emergence of the popular sectors in Colombia
1.3 Popular Culture and knowledge generation within the popular sectors
1.4 The community and its organizations

2. Pedagogical Component, including participatory research and action as pedagogical principles and methods of

Popular Education. This component contains the following units:

2.1 Participatory-Action Research: Principles, methods and techniques

2.2 Popular Education methods and techniques

2.3 Communication and Popular Education

2.4 Production and use of materials for Popular Education.

3. Operative Component, related to the most practical aspects of project design, implementation and evaluation:

3.1 Participatory planning from the grass-root level

3.2 Project design and implementation

3.3 Project management and administration

3.4 Project monitoring and evaluation

4. Specific Component, related to the particular area in which each participant works. This component is aimed at linking the general principles and methodology of Popular Education to the specific context of the participants' activities. They may select two modules related to their particular fields: Income Generation, Literacy, Health Promotion, Housing, etc.

In relation to the **Teaching/Learning Method**, the program makes some explicit statements about the principles upon which those methods are defined.

> a) Practice is both a source of knowledge and a criterion of truth; therefore learning activities must start from participants' experiences and their results must be applied to solving concrete problems.
>
> b) Knowledge is collectively produced and re-produced through dialogical interaction between educators and educatees, therefore pedagogical relationships must be democratic, horizontal and egalitarian.

In this sense, the teaching/learning method is an opportunity to reflect upon and conceptualize both social relationships and the relationship people establish with their own reality in order to transform it. By using this methodology, the program encourages the collective production of knowledge through dialogue and cooperative interaction.

As Hleap [1991] notes, if the relations among participants in the educational process are democratic the teachers become guides, coordinators, and supporters of a learning process which is based upon experiences lived by participants within their culture and which vindicates the practical and immediate application of their knowledge to the solution of problems. The fundamental principles of the teaching-learning process are put into practice through a variety of pedagogical methods and techniques, educational

media, group dynamics, and problem-posing strategies for dealing with the participants' reality.

The **Program Evaluation** was conceived as an opportunity for permanent feed-back and collective learning for all those who participate in the program (trainers, trainees and other community agents). In this sense, evaluation is mainly a collective reflection about various element of the program (contents, activities, participants' learning, program influence on the community, program management, and internal consistency among these elements). For this reason, it should have a participatory character.

While the program allows participants to define specific evaluation processes, it suggests the following criteria:

1. The program's socio-cultural relevance (is the program appropriate for its social and cultural milieu?)

2. The program's capability for supporting community organization.

3. The program's capability for promoting popular self-reliance and self-management

4. The program's capability to inspire autonomous and permanent learning and collective action on the part of its participants.[3]

Program organizational structure

In order to put into practice the principle and ideas mentioned previously, the program adopted an organizational structure with the following **components**: a) the participants organized into groups called CIPAS[b],b) the trainers also organized into a group called the Research-Advisory Team, and c) the Site Coordinators (based in Cali, Tumaco and Buenaventura)

CIPAS (Circles for Social and Academic Participation). These are participants's groups formed during the course of the program, popular educators from the same zone who are interested because of geographical reasons or common training objectives, in working together to read and discuss study materials, and to carry out the related activities. The expectation is that the CIPAS will evolve into autonomous groups capable of developing their own mechanisms for academic and organization evaluation and internal control.

The Research-Advisory Team is a group of university professors, originally members of the P.E.U. of the University del Valle, responsible for the coordination of the training program, for developing materials, and for

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[b]. CIPAS stands for the Spanish words: Círculos de Participación Académica y Social.

designing and implementing workshops. The R-A Team also advises the CIPAS in their work, contributing knowledge, methodology, techniques and procedures derived from the various disciplines of its participating members. It is intended that these contributions be integrated into a single whole, within the holistic framework of the program.

The Site Coordinators. These individuals are located in the various program sites (Tumaco, Buenaventura and Cali). They are responsible for the communication between the program's central office and the CIPAS in the different regions, for doing administrative tasks and paperwork that facilitates the academic implementation of the program in their respective areas (registration, workshop preparation, materials distribution, logistical support, etc.).

Participatory Training Units. (**U.F.P.**[c]). These units are designed to be "open-ended materials, susceptible to being transformed by context" (Hleap, 1985). The UFPs are texts organized around problems posed to the participants instead of themes, and employ a workbook format (*Fichas*) as the basic unit of study materials.

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[c]. U.F.P. corresponds to the Spanish words: Unidades de Formación Paricipativa

The workbooks are the basic textual units on the basis of which descriptions, concepts, and analysis are developed. They also describe case studies, and propose activities and projects for the participants to carry out in their work. Each worksheet presents a perspective on a given problem but does not attempt to treat it fully. They are problem-posing texts intended to invite the learner to investigate, reflect, and ask questions rather than attempting to offer answers. The U.F.P. promotes a learning process which is self-regulated, investigative, and collective; it promotes qualitative, participatory, and self-analytical evaluation.

The Workshops are spaces for direct interaction between the groups of professors, who make up the Research-Advisory Team, and the participants. They provide opportunities for the participants to share their experiences as Popular Educators and interpret them with reference to the problems posed by each U.F.P. The students make presentations of their work, compare them to those of other participants, and confront the analysis and critique made by everyone of each presentation. Additionally they provide a forum for the evaluation of each unit and of the workshop itself, and also for the identification of new content matters estimated pertinent for future units.

The **Operational Structure** can be summarized as follows: The research-advisory team prepares the materials for a U.F.P. and sends them to the site coordinators, who distributes them to the students; in their turn they read them, first individually, and then meet with their CIPAS to discuss the material. Two weeks later, the site coordinator calls the participants to a "Pre-workshop", where the CIPAS analyze and evaluate the materials and select activities to be carried out during the following four weeks, at the end of which a workshop is held with the trainers as previously described. After each workshop the trainers read the activity reports prepared by students and discuss them in regular meetings of the research-advisory team, and return them with observations and suggestions, together with materials for the development of the next unit. From there the cycle repeats itself. (See Figure 2, next page).

The foregoing description shows how the program attempts to put into practice the principles of Popular Education. However, this attempt has met with various obstacles. The foremost of these concern the theoretical consistency (or lack thereof) of these principles themselves, and this I will take as an object for analysis in the following chapter of this study.

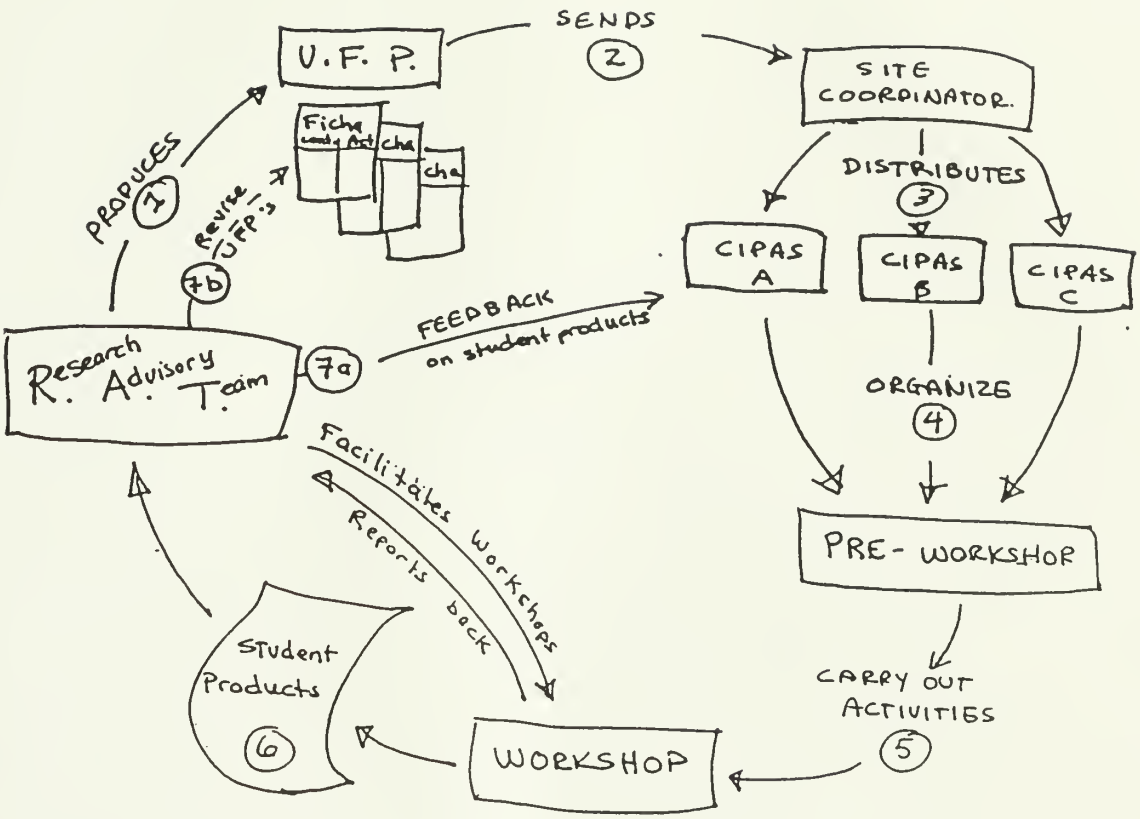

Figure 2

Flowchart of the Program

NOTES

1. Under the generic name of Popular Educators, the program includes all of those education agents which undertake pedagogical activities in the broadest sense with grass-root communities (adult educators, rural extension workers, social promoters, health promoters, literacy workers, etc). These activities must support community organization processes and must seek increasing autonomy for the people in the process of transforming their own reality.

2. "La Educación Popular y la formación de Educadores Populares", in Cuadernos AIPE. Serie, Educación Popular, No.1. Produced by PROCEP - Program de capacitación de Educadores Populares de Bolivia.

   In the same sense, the Second National Encounter of Popular Education held in Santiago, Chile, in 1982, concluded: This process is characterized by its intentionality. That is, a Popular Education experience occurs when a group consciously undertakes an educational process, whose intention is made explicit and shared. It is not considered to be a Popular Education activity, for example, for a group to meet in order to resolve basic needs but with no educational purposes ["Encounter Report", in Educación y Solidaridad, No.1: 27].

3. These are not the only features which distinguish this program as unusual within the University del Valle. Besides its participatory curriculum design previously described, this is also the only program at Univalle that is both evaluated and **re-designed** not only with its students but also with future users. Before offering the program for the second time in Cali and for the first time in two new sites (Zarzal and Villavicencio), curriculum design workshops were carried in these sites with local popular educators in 1990. In these workshops the program, as offered so far, was evaluated, and future participants' training needs were identified, based on an analysis of the work of popular educators in these areas, "in order to acquire new knowledge and experience that help us to act effectively as agents of education in our own communities" [Report of the Evaluation and Re-design Workshop].

CHAPTER VI

ANALYSIS OF THE PROGRAM: A CASE OF HOLISTIC TRAINING?

While reviewing the documentation of the Training Program for Popular Educators at the University del Valle an interest-ing characteristic became apparent in regard to the group of professors and trainers who have been active in promoting the program[1]. The work of this group, both in its process and results, has been the object of an on-going individual and collective reflection on the part of those involved.

In 1986, while still a member of the Popular Education Unit, Renato Ramirez, wrote a first version of the history of that innovative unit. This version not only reflects his personal perceptions about this group but also provoked a discussion within the group aimed at creating a mutually acceptable interpretation of its efforts. His account was afterwards included as a theme in a *ficha* (workbook) of the first Participatory Training Unit, entitled Quiénes somos ?, De donde venimos ? (Who are we?, Where do we come from?). That was designed to introduce the first group of students into the program[2]. His history of the P.E.U. has also been enriched with evaluations and discussions by students as a part of the re-design of the introductory unit.

Other members of the Research-Advisory Team also have discussed the training program. Miryan Zúñiga has written various articles related to different aspects of the program, such as its training strategy [1985], the theoretical principles underlying its pedagogic model, and its significance for the University del Valle as well as for the construction of alternative pedagogies for Popular Education in Latin America [1986a and b]. Carlos Arango coordinated a participatory research effort in collaboration with a group of popular educators from Tumaco whose focus was the participa-tory behavior of the program's students [Arango, 1990]. And, in February, 1991, José Hleap, also a member of the Research-Advisory Team, published the results of his systematization of the communication strategy of the training program [Hleap, 1991].

This means that in writing this case study I had, as a base, a **collective memory** which has been built by the group itself. The above-mentioned references to the training program, as well as other references included in various Participatory Training Units of the program and other articles and research projects, were written by members of the group and were subsequently subjected to the critical analysis of the group itself.

I see this collective memory, and the process from which it was developed, as an attempt to put into practice the guiding principle of Popular Education that points out the need to integrate action and reflection, theory and practice, within a constant process of coming and going between the one and the other, so that they mutually explain, justify, and legitimize each other. This dynamic of action-reflection-action gives to the practice of training popular educators a character of **praxis**.

However for this action-reflection-action cycle to become a complete process in the training program, it is necessary that students (popular educators-in training, but having had a significant experience) offer their background of knowledge, experiences, concerns and expectations for a critical review. In this manner they can enter into a fruitful dialogue with other experiences and knowledge accumulated in the field of Popular Education and systematized in the materials included in the UFP's.

In other words, the training process in this program is not confined to the acquisition of new information or to the learning of new techniques or skills. It also includes critical recovery of the knowledge produced by collective reflection about participants' experiences as popular educators; about what they have learned in working with

their communities; about the acquisition and/or development of habits of collective and participatory work; and about the construction of new knowledge through putting together participants' knowledge and critically confronting them with the knowledge accumulated by diverse disciplines.

This dialogue among participants and between trainers and trainees that it is expected to be maintained throughout the program, is initiated with the Introductory Training Unit. This unit processes the expectations of the participants with respect to the program, their experiences in community work, their ideas relating to other experiences of Popular Education, and their degree of identity with the Popular Education movement.

In this way the program seeks not only continuity between the principles and procedures established during the process of participatory curriculum design and the curriculum development, it also pursues the gradual development of participants as individuals. They begin by exploring and analyzing their own personal experiences, by reflecting collectively on them in order to learn from their own work as popular educators, and by improving upon that learning through the integration of academic knowledge provided by the units. They also problematize reality through asking critical questions and connecting it with

broader issues, and eventually look for ways to transform that reality through the design and implementation of community projects.

An integrated pedagogic model

The training program's characteristics, as mentioned previously, may be seen as an expression of its underlying Pedagogic Model. This model shows a way **to integrate:**

> disciplinary contents into trans-disciplinary problems proposed by the training units;
>
> individual participants into groups (CIPAS), who must face and resolve those problems in a collective manner;
>
> individual trainers into a research-advisory team, who must assumes its functions of teaching, research, and advising, as a whole; and
>
> academic work and community development into an extensive pedagogical context, including both experiential and scientific knowledge.

This integrated pedagogic model inspires an educational process which promotes people's transformation, through research and action aimed at changing their inter-relations and their relation to the world, rather than emphasizing the mere transmission of knowledge or specific skills. It is a model for setting up educational arrangements which could be both less rigid internally and less isolated from their environment. Determined by this model, educational action, instead of training people for occupying a predetermined

role in a hierarchical society, can create conditions to develop the inherent but latent potential for subordinate groups to change the society as a whole.

What is a Pedagogic Model? Mario Diaz [1986], using Basil Bernstein's theory of cultural reproduction [Bernstein, 1977], defines a pedagogic model as a device for cultural transmission that is derived from a particular form of selection, organization, transmission and evaluation of school knowledge[3]. At the instructional level, a pedagogic model is constituted by three systems of messages: Curriculum (what counts as valid knowledge), Pedagogy (what are the valid forms of transmission), and Evaluation (what counts as the valid realization of knowledge on the part of the taught). At the normative level it is constituted by rules of social relationships and its inherent modalities of control. These two levels interact and influence each other, determining different institutional arrangements.

For Bernstein the curriculum is a particular structure of school knowledge which defines not only what constitutes a unit of study (i.e., a subject matter), but also the social relationships between the subjects involved in the educational activity. He uses the concepts of power and control to demonstrate how a structure of transmission within the school reproduces both the distribution of power

and the form of social control at the social level. This is done through a system of "classification" (social structure within the school), and "framing" (patterns of interaction).

Classification refers to the construction and maintenance of boundaries between contents, and also their inter-relations and stratification. **Framing** refers to the degree of control teacher and pupil have over the selection, organization, pacing and timing of the knowledge transmitted and received in the pedagogic relationship.

The combination of classification and framing constitute what Bernstein calls the **educational code**, which is a princi-ple of regulation of both the distribution of power, and the locus and mechanisms of social control within the school. The code is the deep grammar which regulates a pedagogic model, setting the rules of inter-relations between categories of people and knowledge.[4]

Both classification and framing can be either strong or weak. A strong classification establishes rigid barriers between curriculum contents (independent assignatures), and between teachers and students. Teachers themselves are also separated into different departments, and students into different grades. A weak classification, on the contrary, reduces isolation between, and within, different categories.

Curriculum content can be integrated, teachers can converge into a collaborative labor, and out-of-school educational agents and knowledge can be included in the learning process.

A strong framing establishes a rigid demarcation between "what can be and what cannot be transmitted in the pedagogic relationship". Here the student has no right to decide what, how, and when to learn. Both the institution and the teacher keep control over the discourse and the rules for interaction. When framing is weak, on the other hand, social relations are more flexible and students have more control over their learning process. When both classification and framing are weak, a new notion of pedagogical context appears and those contexts, traditionally considered illegitimate within the school, such as the family and the community, can be incorporated into a broader pedagogical context.

The underlying educational code for the latter arrangement (weak classification and weak framing) is what Bernstein calls an Integrated Code, in opposition to a Collection Type Code, which is characterized by both a strong classification and a strong frame (separated assignatures taught by independent subject specialists to homogeneous groups of students who are graded in groups

isolated from each other and from the school environment, and who have no control and limited choices about what to learn). Figure 3 presents a synopsis of the main differences between the two pedagogic models in relation to eight components of an educational program:

PROGRAM COMPONENTS	PEDAGOGIC MODELS	
	COLLECTION TYPE	INTEGRATED
Curriculum Structure	Separated and hierarchic subjects strongly bounded	A fluid structure of interdependent topics and issues
Selection of Contents	Made by curriculum designers and teachers	Made by teachers, students and other community agents
Academic Knowledge	Bounded by disciplines with strong limits	Related to practice and subject to critical inquiry
Common Knowledge	Kept outside of the program	Incorporated into a pedagogical context
Teacher's Role	Separated by their specialties and their subjects	Interdependent. Organized in trans-disciplinary units.
Student's Role	Limited choices and no control over the pedagogical process	Extensive choices and shared control over the process
Pedagogical Relations	Vertical and one-way communication	Dialogical and determined by collective research
Evaluation	Focused on results and behavioral changes previously determined	Focused of process and done in a participatory way
Admon. and Control	Centralized	Decentralized

Figure 3

Comparison between two pedagogic models

Bernstein's theory of Cultural Transmission is useful for understanding how a given educational program could either reinforce or subvert current patterns of social relations and distribution of power (at the social macro-level) through pedagogical mechanisms that allow program's participants to internalize (at the micro-level of transmission and reproduction of knowledge) the very principles underlying such mechanisms (the educational code).

In other words, the mechanisms of delivery not only impart subject matter but also the principles upon which those mechanisms are based. Then, as a grammar, the educational code is unconsciousnessly internalized, and "in this way, principles of power and social control are realized through educational knowledge codes and, through the codes, shape consciousness" [1977, p.155].

This is why it is important to pay attention to the way the different components of the program are organized. Underneath organizational arrangements there lies a generative configuration which determines the power relationships and the principles of social control expressed at the surface.

Analysis of the program's components

In this section, I make an analysis of the different components of the training program based on the concepts of the cultural reproduction theory briefly described in the previous section. The components to be analyzed are: a) the program's **trainers,** organized into the research-advisory team; b) the **participants,** organized in their CIPAS; c) curriculum **content and activities**, as arranged in the units of participatory training (U.F.P.s); d) program **methods**, specifically the workshops and the activities proposed by the units; and e) the **curriculum structure**, focusing on content sequence and relationships among program areas.

It is clear to me that each one of these components has its own history within the development of the program. That is, both the R.A.T. and the CIPAS, as well as their inter-relations, have changed as organizational entities over time. The way the materials have been conceived, written, and used has also changed, as well as the manner in which workshops are conducted and understood. Even the curriculum structure and sequence has been subject to some modifications. However, for two reasons I will not focus on those changes. First of all, the main concern of my analysis is related to the way the model and its principles, as envisioned by its agents, have been put into practice,

and how this effort contributes to clarify the principles themselves (theory) and their relation to practice. Secondly, an analysis of the changes in and among these elements has already been done by members of the R.A.T. Hleap [1991], for example, analyzes the process of re-socialization of both trainers and trainees by the program experience over a certain period, a time-span in which he identifies changes in regulations, perceptions and decisions made by the program actors in relation to the different components of the training program. From Hleap's study, I gained insights about the difficulties, constraints, and lessons vis-a-vis linking program's principles and practice.

By focusing my analysis on the relationship between principles and their realization I wish to demonstrate that the way in which the program's elements are organized reflects an integrated pedagogic model consistent with the principles of Popular Education. This in turn allows us to show how this organization represents neither a merely methodological innovation nor a simple alternative to more traditional training programs. Instead it constitutes a conscious position in the face of current relations of power and social control; a position informed by the assumption that the program can contribute to changing such configurations of power and social control by transforming patterns of authority inside the pedagogical relationship.

This position is based upon the conviction that such a change contributes to the establishment of new forms of relationships at the macro-social level. The increased flexibility in the relationship between trainers and trainees, for example, makes possible new forms of social interactions that modify relationships of authority within the training context and influence the broader context in which the program is immersed, namely the university, other community development institutions, and the local communities where the popular educators work.

The R.A.T.: Linking teaching to research

The fact that the trainers in this program organize themselves into a team, and designate it as a Research-Advisory Team, signifies not only the intention to put into practice the principles of the integrated pedagogic model, but also the recognition that expressing an idea is not enough for realizing it; it is necessary to set up the appropriate mechanisms. Taking up training responsibilities as a **team** contributes to both making the boundaries between academic disciplines more flexible, and to democratizing the control mechanisms of the teaching process. It is no longer the case of a teacher individually controlling the choice of subjects to be taught and methods for teaching them. Instead, both content and methodology are subject to team

discussion, and must conform to criteria which are collectively accepted, not arbitrarily imposed.

Moreover, the fact the trainers identify themselves as "researchers" and "advisors" means that their teaching efforts must be necessarily linked to the concrete conditions faced by participants in their work, and must seek to impact upon these conditions. It also means that a member of this team does not simply "teach" in the traditional sense of the word (i.e., transmits his or her own knowledge on a given subject matter to a group of students). In a certain sense, the research advisory team is an organizational device for implementing the intention expressed through the years by the University del Valle to link research, teaching, and extension to the community.

But in practice working as a team, and trying to integrate teaching, research and university extension activities, has not been an easy task. In the first place, although the University declares in its discourse the importance of linking these activities, its administrative structure and mechanisms of control are informed by a collection-type pedagogic model which restrains the process of integration. This is observed in the difficulty experienced by the team in negotiating adequate time to fulfill all the commitments demanded by the program. The

university has clear guidelines for assigning and monitoring the academic duties of its professors, but they do not take into account the fact that the activities required by this kind of program demand considerably more time and energy than the activities of a regular course in which the traditional lecture is imparted.

Secondly, the established routines of university work create habits that necessitate a slow learning process for professors to break out of their familiar and specialized individual pedagogical practice and to evolve towards a transdisciplinary group practice Hleap maintains that for the R.A.T., this experience signifies:

> A new conception and a new style for developing pedagogical practice, breaking out of the tradition of vain erudition, magisterialism, and arrogance which characterize many professors. Learning to learn and to be modest, recognizing the validity of non-formalized knowledge, accepting critiques about their own performance, and being able to change [1991, p.219].

CIPAS: Organization for collective learning and action

The organizational arrangement proposed by the program for its participants can be understood as an attempt to put into practice a Popular Education principle according to which education must be a collective enterprise. Therefore it is the group, not the isolated individual, who becomes the basic unit of learning, research and action.

The promotion of a collective learning process is not merely a methodological innovation. At the social level it is related to the premise that the popular classes, as a **collective subject**, must be active participants in their own history and transformation. In fact they have been so involved, since they are already engaged in social practices such as production of wealth, communicative action, political activity, and the production and reproduction of knowledge and culture.

At the pedagogical level the collective construction of a new knowledge can be a means through which the educatees gain consciousness both about their reality and about what they can do in order to transform it. In this sense collective learning may become a tool for liberation, demanding a concept of knowledge that cannot be reduced to an immutable material to be divulged but is rather a dynamic process, socially organized, legitimatized and transmitted. A process that can be constructed and deconstructed.

It is the intention of the program that the CIPAS be formed as autonomous and self-managed groups in that they assume control over their own learning process and design the mechanisms for evaluating it. However, this has been difficult to put into practice. Autonomy is not something that can be ordered; it must be constructed on the basis of

heteronomy. For many CIPAS groups, the non-imposition of rules by trainers was interpreted as a basic lack of work guidelines, a lack which often leads to anarchy and disorder in their activities. The three evaluation workshops that I conducted during this study coincided with the request for trainers to establish control mechanisms for the CIPAS. Their members acknowledged that, as products of a conventional educational system, they needed external control at least while they developed their own mechanisms for regulating group work.

> The deficiency of the CIPAS's academic work is the result of the excessive flexibility on the part of the trainers, who do not exert enough pressure in relation to the quality of our work. In addition, their evaluation reports (Feedback) do not fill the lacuna identified during the workshops [Evaluation Workshop, Tumaco].

Nevertheless, the arrangement of students in permanent work groups is regarded by the participants as not only a very important tool for gaining control over their learning process but also as an organizational device that could go beyond the limits of the training program to become the seed for a more permanent organization within the community. This would avoid the constraints posed by the institutions where the popular educators work. In 1989, three CIPAS from the first group of Tumaco organized themselves into a Popular Education N.G.O. called FUDEPO (*Fundación de Educadores Populares de Tumaco*). FUNDEPO's objectives,

methods, and development approach are informed by the principles of Popular Education as advocated and promoted by the training program. In this sense, this NGO and its activities within the community can be considered an effect of the program on the development of the community. FUNDEPO also can be seen as an example of how the implementa-tion of a pedagogic model reproduces at the social level the principles upon which the model is based. The CIPAS is seen by its participants as a micro-social organization through which they can exert the kind of relationships they want to promote at the community level.

> The CIPAS is also a community, and participation cannot be reduced to attending the meetings. To participate means also to contribute to the advancement and the progress of the group, even though one does not attend all the meetings. A collective coordination and a rotating secretariat help the CIPAS members to participate and gain more responsibility [Evaluation Workshop, Tumaco].

U.F.P.s: Integration of training contents and activities

Contrary to what its name might suggest, the most important characteristic of the participatory training unit is not its participatory attribute, but its transdisciplinary approach. The contents of the training units are not organized by subject matter themes. Instead, they are organized around problems relevant to the work of the popular educators, and treated with a transdisciplinary

focus. Through these problems questions are raised, proposing both issues and situations (either actual or simulated) which must be analyzed and elucidated (decoded) through the development of the *fichas* (workbooks).

Each workbook is a kit of contents, activities, and tools aimed at providing information, ideas, suggestions, and structured experiences which can be utilized for in-depth exploration of specific aspects of a problem in order to solve it (at least partially). They may include descriptions, analyses, and results of experiences related to the problem, and propose activities and/or projects. They allow the participants to study the problem at different levels, be they empirical scrutiny through fieldwork research or conceptual analysis from the perspective of different academic disciplines.

Moreover, the UFPs do not attempt the comprehensive coverage of a given problem, but merely offer a vision of the problem within its context. In this sense the UFPs, as "materials under construction", demand active participation on the part of both the popular educators (students) and of the unit authors (trainers).

The process of producing this "model" of training unit has also been a learning process. Hleap maintains that

producing the U.F.P.s during the first period of the program signified an effort on the part of the authors to surmount their "bad habits" acquired through university work. In fact, writing a material according to the ideal UFP was a demanding and challenging task.

> It is possible to observe a "qualitative jump" between the two first U.F.P.s. The first one "presupposes the user (anticipatory strategy), and offers him/her specific (and limited) options for reading and evaluation; it emphasizes knowledge transmission; and it is "self-sufficient": it leaves no room for building ideas or for debating issues; it requires only application of what is learned through the proposed activities. The second UFP, introduces a strategy centered around the participant's own knowledge (participatory strategy); the author proposes an approach for confronting the problem, leaving enough space so as to "invite" the participants to build and develop the thematic on their own [1991, p.54].

Through this learning process many mistakes were made and the students criticized them during the evaluation workshops:

* "In some cases, there is no correlation between activities and content"
* "Some activities are designed for the workshop but not for involving the community
* "There is no link among the different Units, and sometimes there are even contradictions"

But in spite of their deficiencies, and thanks to these criticisms, the UFPs are getting closer to the ideal expressed by the program, and they have come to be

considered by the participants "useful tools" for their community work, rather than a textbook which "you read in order to do the homework, then you put it aside, and sometime you remember and consult it".

> The UFPs are disturbing and challenging materials that induce us to ask questions of ourselves. A UFP is a collection of experiences from which we can learn. We know that they are materials in process of construction, subject to changes, and it is clear that they are the result of previous research. Someone in this group once said that the more she red the UFPs the more she found new elements in it [Evaluation workshop, B/ventura].

Workshops: Linking theory and practice

The workshops are unique among the components of the training program in that they embody the principles upon which the program has been based while reflecting the real and specific contextual conditions which limit or make possible their realization. It is in the workshop where all the components of the program closely interact, where the participants' (trainers' and trainees') ideas, principles, habits, constraints, and interpretations of the program, as a whole experience, converge. For this reason an analysis of the interactions occurring among these elements during the workshops offers meaningful insights into the relationship between the program's theory and practice.

A review of different workshop reports as well as the workshops I observed show that they are centered around the presentations of the CIPAS's activities. From these presentations discussions arise among trainees with "some participation on the part of the trainers". While this approach has contributed to the trainees' gaining control even over the design, organization, and evaluation of the workshops, the role of the trainers has been reduced to a minimum, preventing them from making contributions to the understanding of the issue in question and for promoting a critical confrontation between conflicting positions. "Many times we learn more in the CIPAS meetings than in the workshops, because learning requires confrontation, and there is no confrontation during the workshops [Evaluation Workshop, Cali].

This situation has prevented the workshops from becoming, as had been expected, spaces of interaction and mutual learning between the R.A.T. and the CIPAS, and the students have began asking for a greater participation on the part of the trainers:

> We consider that the R.A.T. can contribute much more knowledge to the group. When we came to this program we had big expectations about the possibil-ity of acquiring knowledge that would help us to do our community work better, and up to this point, such expectations have not been met [Evaluation Workshop, Tumaco].

These quotes refer to an attitude, already mentioned and criticized in Chapter III, that the popular educator should not play a leading role in the educational process, an attitude resented by the students. As one participant from the Cali group said during an evaluation workshop: "Do you believe that you (the trainers) are close enough to the training process we have lived?. Might it not be the case that you have distanced yourselves from us, leaving us to shoulder the responsibility of the workshops by ourselves? [Evaluation Workshop, Cali].

This student's viewpoint calls sharply into question the *"laissez-faire"* attitude of some popular educators that is based on the philosophy of non-intervention in the educational process. It also points out the need to reflect on and define the most appropriate and useful role of a workshop facilitator.

Nevertheless, the workshops have managed to develop into a participatory form that introduces self-reflection and research into the training process. It reinforces the evolution of the CIPAS into autonomous and self-managed groups, promoting a sense of collective ownership of the knowledge produced during its implementation, an attitude of acceptance of diverse points of view, and a spirit of

responsibility among the participants in relation to its results.

Content sequence: Remains of a collection-type model

The curriculum structure adopted by the program's designers, and described in Chapter V, (pp. 17-19), presents a problem which conspires against integration. The first three semesters of the program are dedicated mainly to general aspects of Popular Education theory and methodology, principles and approaches to development, and principles and methods of Participatory-Action research. Topics related to Community Projects (Design, Implementation, Evaluation and Management), which demand a real involvement with the community, are not introduced until the fourth semester. Up to that point, the relationship of the program to the communities is limited to seeking information or applying certain techniques offered by the UFPs or learned in workshops. This problem was expressed by one participant in the Evaluation Workshop in Tumaco in the following terms:

> The program arrived at this point (Fourth Semester) without fulfilling our expectations in regards to practice. It would be worthwhile to consider re-ordering the sequence of the units. The UFP about Planning at the Grass-root Level, the first which put us to work directly with the community, should be taught closer to the beginning of the program. All theoretical work should be developed around practice [Evaluation Workshop, Buenaventura].

That is to say, instead of "starting from reality ", the sequence of training units responds to a model which may be expressed as:

THEORY---> METHODOLOGY---> PRACTICE (Strong Classification).

However, the sequence proposed by the student cited above could be represented as:

PRACTICE <------> THEORY (Weak Classification).

In the sequence initially adopted by the program there is an implicit conception of theory, according to which theory can be used to control and guide practice, and which suggests that theory must be applied in order to improve such a practice. Therefore, we must first have access to theory and then we can change our action. This conception conceives of theory and practice as two separate entities; and even worse, it implies that theoretical knowledge is superior to practical knowledge because it is more systematic and articulated. With respect to this Cherryholmes states:

> The traditionally accepted superiority of theoretical knowledge over practical knowledge support conventional power arrangements and inequalities in a way so powerful that it is almost invisible [1988, p.98].

But the fact that the relationship between - and within -the group of trainers and the group of trainees allows a two-way communication (flexible or weak framing), makes it

possible to reduce the strength of classification. For the students this is a process, and as such it keeps changing. They also understand that they can act upon those changes, and through them contribute to the transformation of their institutions.

> What we have done so far is only a systematization of the Popular Education discourse. Now we have to advance towards alternative projects with the community, with the use of new perspectives, knowledge and techniques. And where we going from there will have to be very different from what the institutions have done [Evaluation Workshop, Buenaventura].

Program institutional contexts: Barriers or challenges?

Ari Sitas, a South African educator, said in a conference focused on The Role of Education in Building Community Organization: "Usually I am two people, one at the university, a sociologist, and one doing cultural work, in democratic organizations"[5]. Talking with the members of the R.A.T., and reading the minutes of their weekly meetings and the reports of their evaluation workshops, I realized that they also experience the problem - and the challenge - of being two, or more, people in one person: A popular educator committed to the construction of an educational alternative for cultural resistance at the community level, a university professor striving to open some spaces within the institution for legitimatizing the ideas in which s/he

believes, and a public employee struggling against the institutional controls that constrains her/his work.

The R.A.T. members complain because the University does not recognize the full amount of time they need to accomplish all the tasks the program demands, especially now that the program has grown from one group (Tumaco 1) to five groups (Tumaco 1 and 2, Buenaventura 1 and 2, and Cali).

> The efforts of the R.A.T. are spent in a bureaucratic struggle with the University, actions aimed at securing resources for the program and in fulfilling the academic demands of workshops which correspond to five different training groups, when the original proposal was to work with only one" [R.A.T. Internal Evaluation Workshop].

Furthermore, the team members believe that the reason for this quandary is that this is a second- class program in the eyes of the University. One of the members of the R.A.T. described the situation in the following words: "In the University, they do not recognize our program in the same way than they recognize other programs because it is not a conventional one, and because it does not offer any degree. But we have gained some space. Before, they (the administration) did not give us time; now, at least they give us some time for the program activities. We are going to do an information campaign in order for both the program and our contribution to be recognized" [R.A.T. Internal Evaluation Workshop].

Nonetheless, the same person goes on to say that "the time which ought to be invested in advisory activities and in research, collecting experiences in order to systematize them and incorporate them into the UFP's is spent instead fighting for better working conditions and trying to get [the University] to respect what we have accomplished". So, the students begin to complain increasingly of the lack of attention from the R.A.T.

> We think that the R.A.T. should improve its work, and that more advising is needed. We want the R.A.T. to spend more time with us. Their [lack of] availability affects us. We also believe that the members of the R.A.T. could help us more in the workshops, so that there will be clearer conclusions, better utilization of time, and so that the process will be less difficult [Evaluation Workshop, Buenaventura].

Paradoxically, the situation lived by the trainers, which has generated sometimes bitter confrontations with the trainees, is also experienced by the latter due to their double role as popular educators and functionaries of community development institutions. The program participants complain about the difficulty in implementing the activities proposed by the UFPs because their institutions, on the one hand, define previous guidelines which prevent them from developing their work in a participatory manner. On the other hand, the institutions overload them with a series of assignments in such a way that they do not have time for the program.

Hleap explains the contradiction of the students in the following terms: "They live a tension between two equally-weighted logics: the logic of the functionary as opposed to the logic of the popular educator; and the logic of the student (within traditional "banking education" approach) as opposed to the logic of the participant (within a holistic training program). In both cases, the tension is between a **habitual** practice, which induces conformism, and a **new** practice, which demands transformation" [1991, p.124].

It would seem that in these confrontations, both trainers and trainees forget that at the bottom of the problem there is a conflict of pedagogic models: the integrated pedagogic model promoted by the program, on one side, and the collection type pedagogic model promoted by both the university and the development institutions on the other. From this perspective, rather than fighting each other, trainers and trainees should be on "the same team", looking for ways to change the institutional approach to academic work in the university, and social work in the social institutions.

It is important to note that since 1985 the R.A.T. had foreseen that the implementation of a program inspired by an integrated pedagogic model within the university would not be able to avoid conflicts. At that time, Miryan Zuñiga

analyzed the questions raised during the process through which the program was approved by the university:

1. Should the university train people who will not be professionals? (The program does not provide professional degree but accreditation certificates).

2. Should the university devote the same effort and recognize the same status to this program as it does to other regular programs?. (the program accepts students without high school degrees but with experience in community work)

3. Should the university approve a program whose content is not determined beforehand?.

4. What are the academic disciplines, and therefore the departments, in charge of this program's content?

She concluded that such questioning reflected the University's difficulty in accepting a program which invited their students to participate in the selection and organization of its content [1985, p.41].

José Hleap considers that in the process of negotiation the institutional logic prevailed over the logic of the Popular Education, resulting in a gradual weakening of the innovative characteristics of the program proposal.

> During this period, there was much more negative incidence of the University over the program (paperwork, requirements, problems for the faculty and students, lack of recognition of our work, etc.) than there was transformative influence of the program over university routines. Nevertheless, at many official university levels the program began to gain acceptance and understanding vis-a-vis our mode of work, and some even sponsored us (for example, the Academic Vice-

Rector) when they found in the program a desirable model of "University" [1991, p.132].

The commitment of the members of the R.A.T. allowed the program, even under these difficult conditions, to conserve to a large extent its characteristics, and to gain an increasing acceptance within the University. According to Carlos Arango (1990), the Popular Education Unit has progressively made it possible for the School of Education in particular, and the University in general, to commit themselves to the popular sectors of the society. The Training Program for Popular Educators is, in his view, a way for the University to respond to the needs of those sectors, and by doing so the benefits are not only for the latter but also for the institution itself. These benefits are related to the following factors:

1. The beneficiaries of the program are involved in concrete work with isolated (in the majority of the cases) communities. The program offers them the opportunity for advanced training without losing contact with their work.

2. Through the program the University can increase its coverage of services offered while gaining experience in community work carried out within diverse contexts. This experience will broaden the knowledge which the University ought to have about its social environment.

3. A meaningful relationship can be established between what the popular educators do in their communities and the technical and methodological training provided by the program.

In light of the preceding comments by members of the R.A.T., and considering the current position of the Training Program as an anomaly functioning within a university setting, I think it is possible to say that the program is carving a viable place for itself. What does this mean in terms of the transformative nature of Popular Education? Only time will tell, but it does appear that the program is providing the "yeast" to make some changes in attitudes, however slow, within the system.

NOTES

1. This group was originally called the Popular Education Unit and now is known as the Research Advisory Team.

2. The "first version of the program" was offered between 1987 and 1990 in Cali, Buenaventura and Tumaco. Although, the program was officially approved by the University in May 16, 1986 (Resolución # 067 del Consejo Superior de la Universidad del Valle), the first group (Tumaco 1) initiated activities the first semester of 1987. Responding to numerous requests from both popular educators and community development institutions, the second semester of 1987, the program was offered to three new groups: Tumaco 2, Buenaventura, and Cali; and ultimately, a second group from Buenaventura initiated the program in the first semester of 1988 (Buenaventura 2). So, when I started the field work of this study (August, 1989) the program had 118 students distributed like this:

Tumaco 1:	15 students, in the training final stage (Evaluation of Community Projects)
Tumaco 2:	28 students
B/ventura 1:	25 students
B/ventura 2:	30 students
Cali:	20 students

3. The concept of Pedagogic Model is useful for understanding the mechanisms through which social relationships are reproduced within the school inasmuch as it permits the examination of the relationships between different kind of school knowledge; between school and extra-school knowledge; between the agents of the pedagogical interaction (both instructional and normative); between different levels of the school organization; and between different forms of communication within the school and between the school and its cultural, economic and political contexts [Diaz, 1986].

4. The educational code regulates the processes of transmission and acquisition of the social order, within the school. The relations between internal principles create an order in both the criteria of selection and organization of knowledge, and in the practice of communication and the social relations implied in its transmission and evaluation [p.64].

5. SITAS, A. (1986). "Working Class Culture, Organization and Education". Paper presented to the Conference The Building of Community Organizations: The Role of Education. Center for Adult and Continuing Education, University of the Western Cape. South Africa.

CHAPTER VII

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

> Theory is always more practical than practice because it expands our alternatives for action [J. Dewey].

Summary and conclusions

This study has analyzed the relationship between theory and practice in Popular Education from diverse perspectives, beginning with that of practitioners. Based upon a review of reports of selected Popular Education encounters in Latin America, and on a comparative study of Popular Education programs in six Latin American countries, it was possible to make sense of what practitioners say Popular Education is. From this description we could detect that popular educators use a certain notions in order to describe, rationalize, explain, and justify their activities, developing a specific language in which terms like participation, popular culture, popular knowledge, political project, social change, etc., are quite common. However, when examined more closely these notions sometimes exhibit lack of clarity, precision, articulation and interconnectedness.

In other words, we can conclude that popular educators more or less agree upon a set of values and principles which explain, guide, and legitimize what they do in practice.

But when those principles and values are taken for granted, they evolve into uncritically applied formulas, running the risk of loosing their explanatory, legitimatizing, and even their guiding character. This could lead to a contradictory situation in which the theoretical explanation of what is done do not correspond to the action, so action continue its own course without the possibility of testing - and being tested by - theory. As Cherryholmes asserts: "Educators may offer good reasons for what they do, but what they do is often done for reason other than those they give" [1988, p. 2].

Practitioners' account was later confronted with the perspective of scholars and researchers who have studied this field and have made contributions to its development. This confrontation was aimed at identifying a) divergences between theory and practice in the field, b) problems resulting of such divergences, and c) strategies for developing and linking theory and practice within the field.

From this debate an important need was identified: the need for redefining, articulating and interconnecting the main concepts upon which the popular Education discourse has been developed (concepts such as participation, popular culture, knowledge and power), as a first step for bridging the gap between theory and practice. It is also necessary

to pay greater attention to activities such systematization of Popular Education experiences as an initial step for developing practice-based theory; research, both academic and participatory-action research; and training.

The study has focused on training in order to analyze how, through this activity, the gap between theory and practice can be either widened (through instrumental training), or narrowed (through holistic training). A holistic training approach was proposed, based on Gramsci's ideas in relation to the formation of organic intellectuals and the possibility of constructing a counter-hegemony from the interests of the subordinated groups of society.

At this point the Training Program for Popular Educators at the University del Valle of Colombia was introduced as a case of a program which attempts to implement a holistic training strategy. For the analysis of this training program the documents produced during its design and its implementation were reviewed to gain insights into how Popular Education theory has been understood and handled in this program. The holistic training strategy described in chapter IV was useful for providing criteria for the description and analysis undertaken in both chapter V and the following chapters.

But the examination of the program also required fieldwork in order to understand it as a mediation between theory and the educational practice of the program itself, as well as the practice of its participants (popular educators) in their communities. Therefore, the review of documents was complemented with fieldwork data-gathering techniques: observations, interviews, group discussions, and the critical analysis of the evaluation workshops' results. These activities were executed while the author was working in the program, as a trainer, between August, 1989 and July, 1991.

After describing the elements of this strategy, the study critically analyzed them, taking both the attributes of Popular Education and the Bernstein's theory of cultural reproduction as criteria for its critical analysis. This analysis clarified how the program seeks to put into practice the principles of Popular Education. It also revealed problems such as obstacles in assessing the pertinence and consistency of these principles within the context of the program, institutional constraints presented by the University, and the attitudes and habits of both trainers and participants towards adopting and applying the principles.

I found that one of the best ways to analyze and make conclusions regarding the training program was to listen to what its participants (trainers and trainees) say in the training sessions, in the meetings of the research-advisory team, and in the evaluation workshops. Therefore, numerous students' and trainers, quotations were included to support and confront my own analysis. An overall conclusion can be summarized in the following comments by two participants in an evaluation workshop in Buenaventura. The first one said, in relation to the effects of the program in her work:

> The program has been useful to us in working with the community. We have seen a changer in ourselves with respect we did before receiving training. Now we are "better friends" of the community, we give more opportunity for the people to participate in the projects; and although we are constrained by the institutional framework and limited by the agency for which we work, we've undergone a change in attitude. The promotor is not longer the "know-it-all", and this impacts not only ourselves, but also the institutions and communities with which we work [Evaluation Workshop, Buenaventura].

The second student emphasizes, with a tenor of optimism and hope, the gradual, yet difficult character of the resocialization process undertaken by the program

> We are being transformed. We see it in our practice. We have a long way to go, for sure. And above all we need to look with a broader perspective at the possibilities for our own transformation [Ibid].

The fact that the training program works within a highly respected public university which plays a very

important role in the educational, cultural, and social development of the region, offers the opportunity for the program to influence a significant segment of the community, which would otherwise be difficult for a Popular Education program to reach. In addition, the program has the possibility of exerting some influence on other teacher training programs within the school of education, and even on other faculty members, by sharing alternative principles, attitudes, and approaches toward teacher education.

Recommendations for linking theory and practice

For making recommendations at this level, we have to recognize that a Popular Education theory should be assessed, first of all, for its commitment to the political project of the popular classes, and secondly for its effort to act according to it. We must note that practice is more than action, it is constituted by activities, rules, interests, commitments, ideologies, and arrangements of power. A critical educational theory of Popular Education must accept the need to employ the interpretive categories of participants. It should provide a means by which "distorted self-understandings" may be overcome by participants and should expose those aspects of the existing social order which obstruct social change. And finally it

should inform the practitioners by indicating the actions that they need to take in order to transform their reality [Carr and Kemmis, 1986]. This is why not only the methodology of Popular Education should be participatory and democratic, but also both its content and its objectives should serve the class interests of the popular sectors.

I suggest four steps to begin redefining Popular Education theory. First, re-define the concept of community participation. Second, explore the concept of popular culture in regard to its complexity as a result of both its own constitution and its dialectical relationships with other cultures within a given social formation. Third, recognize the relationships among knowledge, culture and power. And fourth, inter-connect all these concepts within a holistic perspective rather than take them as separate aspects of a process.

The concept of **Community Participation** must be based on the assumption that people at the local level not only know their own situation better than many outside "experts", but also have both the motivation and the tools to solve their own problems. This is a first step in transforming the relationship between intellectuals and common people, a step that could enable popular sectors to become agents of their own development instead of passive beneficiaries of external

aid. This assumption also lays a foundation for Popular Education programs to work "shoulder to shoulder" with the community.

Participation, in these terms, is more than the passive acceptance of the program (i.e., utilize its facilities and educational services). But the emphasis that this concept of participation places on the community's assumption of the responsibility for its own education and development must be taken with caution. The concept of participation as mere cooperation has been used to demand people to implement initiatives planned by outside institutions. Such a concept evolves into the exploitation of the community as a labor force or as a mere provider of materials, time and/or money for helping to carry out projects and activities, shifting the duties from the government and social institutions to the population. In this case the right to participate can be transformed into a burden for the community, specially when to participate means to get involved in activities conceived and defined by an institution from its particular viewpoint and within its own logic and values. This is not a model of true community participation, but merely involves the population in an auxiliary role.

In order to avoid falling into this model it is necessary to understand that participation is related to a

series of concepts and practices interwoven in the social web, such as those of power, knowledge, and culture. That is, to re-formulate the concept of participation we have to:

> a) re-consider the power relationships between, and within, the educational project and the community,
>
> b) reassess the role of the popular knowledge and culture in the analysis of the community situation and the actions undertaken to transform it, and
>
> c) recognize the socio-economic and political constraints that limit the participation of the community in a concrete situation.

Taking into account these factors helps us to understand the congruence or incongruence between the program's and the community's interests and reasons for working together. For the program, and even for the community, the immediate goal could be, for example, rasing consciousness and/or improving people's living conditions. But in the final analysis we can say that it is in the interest of the community to ultimately gain control over programs and institutions in order to transform them into real tools for people's development and emancipation. Therefore, if a program is to be truly congruous with community interests it must be understood that participation, when circumscribed to by a merely technical approach to resolving a particular problem, generates mechanisms which restrict, rather than encourage, the commitment of the community to the program's purposes. It limits participation to instrumentation.

As mentioned above, the concept of participation is related to, and interacts with, other concepts such as power, knowledge and culture. So, in order to re-conceptualize one we must re-conceptualize the others in order to change the old concept of community as a group of people with common interests. Such a concept conceals the internal differences related to class, culture, ethnic, and gender modes of oppression, allowing the oppressor groups to take advantage of the projects designed for helping the whole community. Being clear about these differences is a necessary step to understand the complexity of participation and its effects in the redistribution of power.

It is essential to recognize that communities are not homogeneous entities, they are composed of disparate groups with different interests and problems. Awareness of internal contradictions creates the need to identify how local power structures affect participation. This complements the criterion of using local organizations as mechanisms for achieving community participation; the fact that a given organization is locally based does not guarantee that it represents the interests of the majority of the community.

In this sense the promotion of popular participation should include the identification of those local organiza-

tions which have a broad social base and which exercise basic democracy - that is, its members take part in decision-making and its leaders maintain two-directional communication with the base. This is important in preventing the strategy of popular participation from becoming another way to widen the gap between powerful and powerless groups within the community. Taking these criteria into account, a Popular Education program must promote a strategy of community participation which includes the involvement of the population in the processes of analyzing their problems, in the planning and implementation of actions aimed to resolve such problems, and in the control and evaluation of the process as a whole.

This conception of community participation has both political and epistemological implications, and its application in practice certainly will generate a new dynamic of conflicts and contradictions within the community, within the Popular Education programs, and between the intellectuals and the community. First of all, for the community playing an active role in the analysis of its problems, people's perception of their reality must be recognized as valid as the intellectual's scientific approach. That is at the final analysis the recognition of popular knowledge[1]. But intellectuals working as popular educators with communities have to break away from the

professional attitude of resistance towards both recognizing the value of non-scientific knowledge and sharing their own knowledge. Negative attitudes towards popular knowledge, commonly hidden behind a participatory discourse, constitute serious obstacles to opening a significant role for local people in the process of deliberation.

Secondly, coordination of decisions among the various social agents (both communal and institutional) implies that participants in the decision-making process must represent social groups and institutions that will validate and adopt the decisions made. Otherwise coordination could become a bureaucratic exercise between organization leaders detached from the population, on one side, and administrators of the programs and institutions on the other.

Finally, the process of participatory planning, programming, implementation and evaluation implied in this concept of participation have to consider the diversity of interests that intervene in such processes, and therefore should take into account structures of power within the community not only with the purpose of making these process more effective and removing the factors which prevent people's participation, but also with the intention of changing current power arrangements within the community in order to empower grass-root people and their organizations.

The concept of **Popular Culture** must be redefined by Popular Education theory, acknowledging the political nature of culture and the capacity of the ruling classes for reproducing and imposing their cultural values, meanings, and social practices, in order to legitimize the ideological and moral conditions for economic exploitation and political control. As Giroux reminds us, within the dominant culture meaning is universalized and the historically contingent nature of social reality appears as self-evident and fixed [1983, p.196].

This political character of culture, in addition to the fact that the popular sectors of the society are constituted by diverse classes with divergent interests, results in the multifaceted character of the Popular Culture. In relation to this, Piña and Goldechmied state:

> Popular Culture is not a single conception but a multitude of conceptions which correspond to the diverse situations, and modes of economic and social interaction of different popular groups. These conceptions are characterized by their unexplicitness and as a conglomerate of aspects deriving from sedimentation within the popular consciousness of the religions and philosophies of the past. This leads us to note the heavy imprint of domination upon popular culture and to realize that any attempt to study it is only possible in light of this domination [1986, p.20].

As a consequence, popular culture contains important elements of the dominant culture that have been transferred to the people through "non-popular" education (among many

other means). In other words, we can find in the Popular Classes a dual cultural system that has interwoven, within popular conceptions, dominant cultural contents together with expressions that reflect consciousness about their own existence as distinct social classes. To recognize this is an important step towards demystifying popular culture.

The concept of **Hegemony** allows us to understand the relationship between knowledge, culture and power and how Popular Education could become a tool for the popular sectors to fight against the ideological and cultural hegemony exerted by a minority class which has imposed a political project that keep most of the people dominated, dependent and exploited. As Piotte explains:

> The function of hegemony is exercised essentially at the level of culture and ideology. It is the means through which a class obtains the consent, adhesion, and support of subordinate classes. It is the way one class places itself as the vanguard and directive with the consent of the other classes. In order to achieve a directive role, this class must convince the others collectively that it is the most adequate to ensure the development of society. This class must diffuse its conception of life, its values, in such a manner that the rest of the classes adhere to them [1972, p.205].

Understanding Popular Education as a tool with which to fight on the terrain of hegemony, to produce a new hegemony, means to recognize the existence of a stock of knowledge and skills that people have historically developed just to be

able to withstand and survive within an oppressive situation. Such knowledge and skills (Popular wisdom) have produced, according to Felix Cadena [1984], the strength of peasantry resistance which has allowed the survival of the peasant economy in the context of the expansion of capitalism in the countryside. This spontaneous and un-organized resistance should be developed towards an organized movement with a clear political focus.

In this process, Popular Education helps develop spontaneous resistance[2] into class-conscious social movements and create tools for popular organizations which can break isolation. With the ingredients of resistance, popular knowledge, organization, and a political project, popular educators, as organic intellectuals of the subordinated sectors of the society, can and must act as catalytic factors in the process of generating counter-hegemony. This is way Popular Education implies high levels of Participation, the beneficiaries of Popular Education programs must participate in the decisions about the entire process from the very educational needs assessment throughout the design, implementation and evaluation.

As a counter-hegemonic activity Popular Education can help to undermine the hegemony of the ruling classes, questioning and disputing it in all the spaces of the civil

society - the family, the school, the church, cultural and community organizations, etc. Therefore, Popular Education programs should unmask the values imposed by dominant classes, such as those of individualism, competition, fatalism, negative self-image. They should also develop critical ability by which people can detach the liberating forces of their culture from the oppressive ones in order to promote fraternity, cooperation and solidarity, as the bases for the establishment of a new kind of social relationships. Related to this point, Felix Cadena asserts that for popular educators the new society should be not only a goal for the future. "Popular Education should seek, in the daily work, to implement the new social relationships suggested by the principles of an alternative society" [1984: 34].

Along the same lines, Mario Sequeda asserts that the challenge is

> to create the conditions under which Adult Community Education can be an anticipation and **living laboratory** of basic human values that contribute to the constitution of a new historical subject who is able to set the basis of a democratic, liberating, kindly, and happy conviviality [1987, p.36].

Once the concepts of community participation, popular knowledge and popular culture are re-interpreted and inter-connected through the concept of power, some issues can be posed in relation to linking theory and practice. What kind

of power arrangements are being supported by our strategy of community participation? Whose interests are being served by the kind of knowledge and values we are promoting through our educational practice? How do power imbalances between popular educators and communities affect the results of a Popular Education program? These questions presuppose the existence of conflict as a constituent of any pedagogical relationship, a factor that must be taken into account in any effort to link theory and practice.

Recommendations for the training program

In general terms, the recommendations for the training program are the same ones already offered in relation to re-defining and inter-connecting the notions of participation, culture, knowledge and power. In other words, both trainers and trainees should recognize their differences in relation to these categories and acknowledge how these differences affect dialogue and participation both within the program and between the program and the communities.

However, I would like to make some concrete suggestions to the training program:

1. The training program should pay more attention to the development of the CIPAS as seeds for organizing and networking at the community and regional levels. As the experience in Tumaco demonstrated, the CIPAS have the potential to become the building blocks for organizing the community around educational projects which have both an integrated vision of development, and a scope beyond the local frontiers. But in order to do so the program has to place more emphasis on the following aspects:

* Stimulate a sense of group identity within the CIPAS which will support their on-going activities after the training programs ends.

* Promote the setting of internal norms within each CIPAS by their respective participants which will guarantee the continuity and effectiveness of group work independent of outside monitoring.

* Strengthen inter-group communication so as to maintain a dialogue among experiences from different contexts. In order to accomplish this efforts should be focussed on promoting strategies such as the Cassette-forum, and intra-network newsletters and bulletins.

2. The locus of control in the processes of production, evaluation and redesign of training materials, as well as in the decision-making process in relation to other aspects of the program, should be displaced from the trainers to the CIPAS. One way to do this might be "short-circuit" the present structure of the program's flow chart by distributing selected student products among the CIPAS for them to take as a basis for generating discussion and activities, instead of always organizing workshops around the U.F.P.s produced by the trainers. Another suggestion is for the students themselves to re-design existing U.F.P.s or produce new materials on themes of their choosing, as part of their training activities. These student-made materials could then be field-tested and evaluated by other CIPAS.

3. A permanent balance should be maintained among program components, meaning that equal weight should be placed upon their value. A balance between the autonomy of the CIPAS and the direction of the R.A.T., and also a balance between the face-to-face trainers-trainees dialogue generated during activities such as workshops and students' independent work while implementing the activities proposed in the training materials.

4. Taking into account that this is a program functioning within an official institution but doing

"alternative work", care must be taken to minimize the tensions generated by this contradictory situation. We should constantly seek to legitimize, within the university setting, the value of community work as an activity of equal importance to any other academic labor.

5. The program should also continue to develop and exert a constant influence on private institutional and governmental policies through its relationship with the University (specially with the School of Education), local institutions of development and the Ministry of Education, while at the same time maintaining its autonomy. This relationship could become a way to meet the need mentioned in this study, of making stronger linkages between local initiatives and national-level policies. Along these lines, the program should take advantage of the legitimization being gradually acquired by Popular Education within different sectors of the civil society. The legitimization gained up to this point must be seen as a base for founding counter-hegemony at different levels of the educational system.

A final recommendation to the promoters of the Popular Education idea in the University is to be aware of the risk underlying the attempt to legitimize the Popular Education discourse within an academic context. This recommendation

may seem contradictory in relation to the main concern of this study, which is oriented towards strengthening and legitimizing Popular Education theory in every instance of the civil society. However, the attempt to make Popular Education tolerable to the University must not be made at the expense of either its potential for a radical social change or its commitment to the struggle of the popular movement. Popular educators must avoid the path, denounced by Giroux but followed by many radical intellectuals in North America, who are "lost in an ever-deepening quagmire of theoretical obfuscation", and for whom

> the battleground for social and political struggle is not longer the factory, the public school, the churches, the unions, or mass culture; on the contrary, the new terrain is increasingly becoming the "radical conference", the symposium at which academics can read their papers and cash in their political currency [1988, p.204].

Suggestions for further research

In order to strengthen the Popular Education field, still under construction, practitioners must continue to make efforts oriented towards defining its domain, while at the same time, establishing connections with other spheres of the work with popular sectors. I would suggest further research about specific issues of Popular Education and holistic training. Such research should be undertaken by

collaborative groups of popular educators, community agents and trainers of popular educators working together in a participatory and dialogical manner, in order to include different perspectives in the understanding of issues and processes such as the following:

* How to gain a better comprehension about the specific characteristics of the popular classes and their particular mechanisms for understanding reality? How do popular sectors reproduce their culture (values, social relations and practice) and how to incorporate popular mechanisms of cultural reproduction into educational methods?

* How to be aware of changes and development within the popular movements in order to take educational action appropriate to their needs?

* How to improve our understanding of popular knowledge and culture and the manner in which they interrelate with scientific knowledge and the dominant culture?

* How to incorporate the cultural expression of the popular classes into educational and organizational methods, and how to adapt techniques from formal education to the Popular Education methodology?

* How to make critical theory more accessible to both Popular Education practitioners and popular sectors and communities? How to demystify academic knowledge, including knowledge produced about Popular Education, in order to promote a more participatory dialogue between intellectuals and communities?

* How to link the micro-level issues of knowledge and values reproduction to the macro-level issue of social transformation, in order for Popular Education to become a real and powerful tool for the subordinated groups in their struggle to change their oppressive situation?

With these questions in mind, popular educators should be aware that they still have a long way to go, and that to answer those questions and to strengthen the theory and practice of Popular Education they need more than rational and logical thinking. They need also to be deeply committed to the popular movements in order to understand people's educational needs. Understanding, feelings, and commitments are ingredients as important as rational thinking in constructing a critical theory of Popular Education.

NOTES

1. The recognition of popular knowledge has its philosophical roots in the writings of Gramsci, for whom all men are intellectuals but not all men have in society the function of intellectuals. There is no human activity from which every form of intellectual participation can be excluded: **homo faber** cannot be separated from **homo sapiens**. Each man, finally, outside his professional activity, carries on some form of intellectual activity, that is, he is a "philosopher", an artist, a man of taste, he participates in a particular conception of the world, has a conscious line of moral conduct, and therefore contributes to sustain a conception of the world or to modify it, that is, to bring into being new modes of thought [1970, p.9]. Based on these ideas, Gramsci maintained that the working class can and must produce its own organic intellectuals and its own philosophy.

2. In a "Talking Book" between Paulo Freire and Antonio Faúndez, Freire says: "In the Pedagogy of the Oppressed, I insist that the starting point of a political and ideological project must be in the levels of aspirations, in the levels of dreams, in the levels of comprehension of reality, and in the forms of action and struggle of the popular groups. And now, you introduce in your analysis, an element which clarifies my own theoretical analysis when you insist that **the starting point should be precisely in the resistance**. That is, in the forms of resistance of the popular masses" [Freire and Faúndez, 1984, p.38]. The concept of resistance is also suggested by Freire in the Pedagogy of the Oppressed when he says: "If men are searchers and their ontological vocation is humanization, sooner or later they may perceive the contradiction in which banking education seeks to maintain them, and then engage themselves in the struggle for their liberation" [1972, p. 48 - 49].

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